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ABSTRACT

A study documented factors associated with the operation of vocational education and training (VET) in small rural schools and their communities. Case studies of 14 schools with high-quality VET practices identified important facilitators of course development: formal commitment to the VET programs within the school's objectives; role of leadership in schools, training providers, employers, and the community; degree of organizational support, school's past experience of success; availability of physical, staffing, and community-based resources; and commitment to partnerships. Barriers were keeping up-to-date with information about and understanding of VET issues; availability of work placements; travel issues; teachers' perceptions of centralized control of curriculum; inflexible internal organization of schools; availability of staffing and other resources; and cluster coordination. The study identified the significance of partnerships. Particular school-industry partnerships are mentioned in the provision of work placements. The schools reported substantial developments in their VET programs in recent years. Implications were developed as recommendations for state and federal policy, school practice and further research, and more long-term planning and cooperative effort to maximize opportunities for students and reduce duplication of efforts. The 37-page report is followed by the case studies. (YLB)

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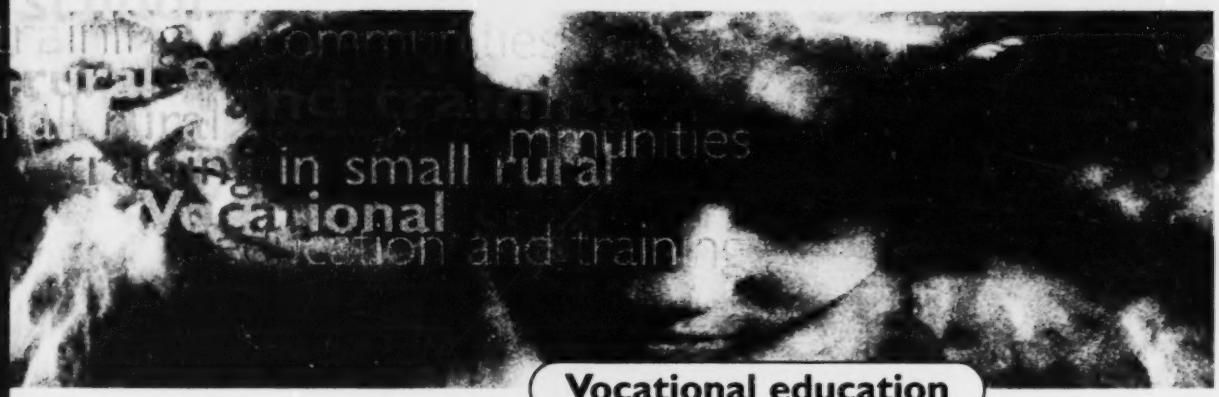

Vocational education and training in small rural school communities

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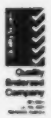

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Executive summary

This study documents factors associated with the operation of vocational education and training (VET) within small rural schools and their communities. It also indicates how providing documentation of existing school practices can be a useful stimulus to the further development of VET within other schools in similar situations.

The study highlights the recognition by schools in small rural communities of the important contribution made by VET to meeting the diverse needs of their students. The schools participating in this study have committed significant resources—time, staff, funding—to the development and implementation of VET programs specifically tailored to meet the needs of their students and the community.

In looking at 14 schools recommended as having high-quality VET practices, the study identifies important facilitators of course development. These are the existence of a formal commitment to the VET programs within the school's objectives (including the formal allocation of time to enable work on development); the role of leadership within the school, within training providers, amongst employers and in the community generally; the degree of organisational support; the school's past experience of success in the area; the availability of physical, staffing and community-based resources (including those required for work placements); and the commitment to partnerships, particularly with other schools.

The study also recognises that in developing VET programs, schools have experienced considerable pressures. The schools point to the substantial barriers to the successful operation of VET within small rural communities. The study identifies these barriers as: keeping up to date with information about and understanding of VET issues; the availability of work placements; travel issues; teachers' perceptions of centralised control of curriculum; inflexible internal organisation of schools; the availability of staffing and other resources (including the costs and time involved in the development and maintenance of courses, and resource conflicts between VET and other senior studies); and cluster co-ordination.

The study also identifies the significance of partnerships (between schools, with TAFE and with local industry) based on a recognition of mutual benefit, to support the development and implementation of VET programs. Of particular value within these schools is the existence of cluster arrangements which allow sharing of resources in staff, the delivery of subjects, co-ordination of work placements, and co-ordination of time-tabling and travel. Leadership from within the school in establishing these partnerships is crucial to their success.

Particular school–industry partnerships are mentioned in the provision of work placements. Overwhelmingly, these schools report on difficulties in locating adequate work placements in their local communities. On the other hand, the value of small communities is identified as the strength of personal contacts and knowledge in identifying students for placements, and for integration of placements with courses and possibilities for ongoing employment.

These schools report substantial developments in their VET programs in recent years. The context for such programs is rapidly changing, and this provides both opportunities and challenges for these schools. On the one hand, the workload and inherent uncertainties create difficulties for small schools with limited staffing resources. On the other, developments such as part-time apprenticeships and traineeships offer more options for young people and increased flexibility of arrangements for schools.

In the second stage of this study, some information is also provided about processes that enable small rural schools without a strong history of VET program provision to learn from, and build upon the experiences of others in similar circumstances. The study reports on the brief development of such programs in response to the provision of information, funds and support to a small group of small rural schools. These schools variously used this to: investigate other similar VET course developments; initiate VET courses where none previously existed; build on and develop existing VET courses; formalise VET (particularly in school policies); promote new and existing VET courses within schools; co-ordinate VET courses with other schools; and reflect on factors influencing their VET course development.

In summary, the following factors have been suggested by schools as being particularly relevant to the creation of ongoing vocational education within schools:

- the existence of a commitment to work or vocational education reflected in a school's aims and objectives (for example, in the school charter)
- the placement of such a commitment within the school's broad educational goals (as distinct from narrow vocational goals)
- the support of school leadership to ensure that this commitment is reflected in programs which operate across the school and that are developed locally in response to local needs and conditions
- the provision of adequate and ongoing resources to enable programs to be developed and maintained
- the existence of partnerships which extend beyond the school, including the establishment of a 'cluster' arrangement with other schools to maximise resource use

Finally, some implications of the study are developed in the form of recommendations for State and federal policy, school practice and further research, and most importantly, there needs to be more long-term planning and co-operative effort, at all levels, to maximise opportunities for students, and reduce duplication of effort by schools.

Policy implications for the Federal Government and State Governments, and for government and non-government education systems highlight a need to focus on providing a strategic framework and secure funding for the provision of VET in schools, with particular emphasis on an understanding of the needs of small rural school communities.

There are also issues relating to practices adopted in small rural schools in the implementation of VET. To offer a range of VET programs, these schools need adequate resources and support systems. To develop the commitment of the school community to local provision of VET programs, a stronger focus on promoting community awareness and understanding of the value, processes and outcomes of VET, is required.

The study highlights that not enough is yet known about the capacity of these rural schools and their communities to support VET programs. Further research is required. This should particularly focus on action research approaches which develop practice and knowledge. The focus of the latter part of this study has provided some indications of how such a reflective intervention can enhance current provisions.

Background

Overview

There has been substantial attention paid to various forms of vocational education and training in Australian schools since at least the mid-1970s. While much of this policy and program development has occurred in response to needs for a more highly skilled workforce within the national and international economy, and specifically as a response to the changing economic circumstances for young people, particular program development has responded as much to the dissatisfaction expressed by young people with 'the traditional academic curriculum'.

Program development has included both specific vocational and training courses for those young people perceived as unsuited to academic education and broad courses for all students on the nature of work. Many schools have developed work experience programs, often as exercises in 'work sampling' and frequently as relatively isolated events for students. Other schools embedded such work placements within their ongoing work education programs and supported students' investigations of what it meant to be part of a productive economy. In some cases, this was linked to ideas of students being enterprising, and small businesses were developed within schools and within communities.

In some areas, schools organised themselves in clusters (initially to make work placements more efficient and later to formalise arrangements with technical and further education [TAFE] and with industry). At the same time, work experience legislation was introduced in some areas to systematise and structure such programs, and to extend work cover and other protection measures.

Considerable debate throughout this time has raised issues about both the rationale and the most appropriate structure for such programs (for example, see Cole 1981; Blunden 1986; Thompson 1997). Formal encouragement and funding (for example, through the Transition Education Advisory Committee [TEAC] initially, later through the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation [ASTF] and the Australian National Training Authority [ANTA]) of innovative approaches to combinations of school and work.

More recently, particular attention has been paid to arrangements for vocational education and training within the senior (or post-compulsory) years of secondary education. The formal relationship between TAFE and schools, articulation of courses, possibilities for cross-accreditation (dual recognition or credit transfer), and the introduction of part-time apprenticeships and traineeships have all been of particular interest to education systems.

Under these organisational changes, there have also been more deep-seated alterations to the ways in which courses, teaching and learning, and assessment are structured. The formalisation of a competency-based system within vocational education and training has been reflected in other areas of schooling and linked to (although distinguished from) 'outcome based' or 'work required' structures in other subjects. Such a system has also had direct relevance to arguments about central or school-based curriculum development.

Rural education and VET

A key issue for the Country Education Project in Victoria (as part of the national Country Areas Program) over the past decade has been the capacity of rural secondary schools to retain students to the completion of Year 12, while students' post-school opportunities in further study and employment has also been an area of concern. The issue of pathways for

young people living in rural communities required closer investigation in order to identify the conditions which will ensure optimal outcomes for them. The Country Education Project over many years had initiated programs to support rural secondary schools in these vital areas.

In 1992, the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training introduced a new component of the Country Areas Program: the national component. States and Territories were asked to identify a number of areas for priority action in rural secondary schools. One of the areas identified by Victoria was vocational education, an area which included school–work training arrangements, student pathways and student programs in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). This emphasis and the resultant initiatives contributed significantly to the development of local programs aimed at improving post-compulsory education outcomes for rural students.

The subsequent operation of these programs identified a number of factors which made it difficult for rural secondary schools to offer a broad range of vocational education programs. One of the most significant factors was the extent and nature of the relationship between the school, TAFE providers and the local employers.

Further major changes occurred in the vocational education and training sector during the mid-to-late nineties. These changes, together with the changes in the funding, management and administration of schools, have had a profound impact on rural schools and their capacity to offer VET programs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that while many larger secondary colleges are expanding their VET programs, many smaller rural schools continue to face significant barriers to the provision of VET.

This study

Rural schools have been developing innovative approaches to the implementation of vocational education for the past decade or more. The Country Education Project (Inc.) was funded by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research to undertake an important research project in 1998–99, to:

- identify and document successful VET implementation strategies
- share these approaches with other rural school communities

The Country Education Project (Inc.) worked in partnership with the Youth Research Centre of the University of Melbourne to complete all aspects of the research project.

CEP (Inc.) initiated this research project because of a growing concern about the capacity of small rural secondary schools to provide comprehensive vocational education and training programs. During the 1990s the role of schools in the provision of VET programs has grown substantially. However, population decline and the resultant demise of many industries in many rural communities, together with continued high demand for the limited resources in small rural secondary schools has seriously impacted on the schools' capacity to offer a comprehensive range of subjects, including VET, in the senior years.

There are major challenges for the employment, education and training sector:

- in the provision of vocational education and training in rural and remote areas
- in the participation of rural young people in entry-level training
- in the recent changes to the provision of employment services

Experience has demonstrated that schools in rural and remote areas play a vital role in both the provision of VET programs and in the preparation of young people for transition from school into the VET sector. Rural school communities need to work together, and in partnership with the VET sector to utilise all available resources to provide cost-effective and successful programs.

There are many instances throughout Victoria and other States where co-operative action has resulted in highly effective programs being developed and implemented. It is important to document and learn from these experiences without attempting to develop a rigid set of guidelines or strategies for others to follow. The lessons from successful programs in schools, communities and registered training organisations (RTOs) have been

documented to serve as a stimulus for other rural communities to embark on their own program of expansion and change.

Increased co-operation and/or flexible use of resources can produce better outcomes for all of the key stakeholders. The research was designed to assist in the identification of factors which assist in co-operative and collaborative action, and which can be used in rural areas to support models of program implementation appropriate to the circumstances of the rural community. The research was designed to document quality practice and to help identify conditions which support the effective implementation of VET programs in rural communities.

The research was initially intended to focus on a small number of rural schools from Victoria, South Australia and one other State. However, in early discussions, it was decided to:

- include more schools in the stage 1 documentation in order to provide more data
- include some Queensland schools, with data collected during attendance at a Country Areas Program conference

In identifying quality practice in the provision of VET programs and entry-level training in rural communities, the themes considered within the research were:

- facilitators to the provision of VET programs in small rural communities
- barriers to provision of VET programs in small rural communities
- in providing VET programs, the strength of partnerships between employers and school communities, and between schools and TAFE
- opportunities for industry placements required in VET programs
- changes to participation in VET programs by rural schools
- implications of and/or opportunities arising from reforms to apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements within rural communities, and schools in particular

Structure of the report

This report is in two parts: this volume contains the report itself in which the project is described, the outcomes are summarised, the implications of the study highlighted and recommendations for future actions are given. The appendix contains the case studies for both stages of the project.

Methodology

The methodology used in this research combined elements of case study and action research approaches. This enabled the identification of the structures and processes in each setting which contribute to positive outcomes for students.

Research stages and phases

The research was carried out in two broad stages. In the first stage, case studies were developed of a number of schools with established VET practice. In the second stage, documentation relating to schools with established VET practice was shared with an additional number of schools to support and promote their development of VET programs. Further information was collected from these schools relating to the impact of the documentary support.

Each of these stages had two research phases. In stage 1, the first 'initiation' phase involved the completion of key planning and liaison tasks. In the second phase, 'documentation of existing practice', fourteen school communities were identified. Eight of these schools were from Victoria, four from Queensland and two from South Australia. The schools were visited several times, key personnel identified, reflective writing supported and case studies compiled. The schools were provided with limited funding to support participation in the study.

In stage 2, the 'sharing of good practice', the first phase involved six further school communities in Victoria being identified for participation. These schools were provided with copies of all the stage 1 case studies and information and resource materials developed during this stage, some limited funding and some direct support and advice from the researchers. The second phase of this stage involved analysis of all the data and drafting of the final report.

Choice of schools

The schools chosen for participation in stage 1 of this study were identified through consultation with a range of appropriate rural education organisations in each State (departments of education, Catholic Education Office, Independent Schools Association, State representatives of the Country Areas Program). They were chosen on the basis of recommendations from key contacts in the organisations noted above as schools having established and well-regarded VET practices.

The study was designed to focus on six Victorian rural schools, with other examples drawn from South Australia and one other State. The six Victorian schools would subsequently be paired with six neighbouring schools in stage 2 to develop VET initiatives.

Following strong expressions of interest from schools, and in seeking a diversity of practice, it was decided to include two further recommended schools in Victoria and collect data from four schools in Queensland as part of their attendance at the Country Areas Program conference. Discussions with the appropriate organisations in these States led to specific recommendations of schools, with four Queensland, two South Australian schools and eight Victorian schools being included in the stage 1 sample.

Criteria for choosing schools also included the need for a spread of geographic locations, school population size, government/non-government schools, proximity to larger

provincial towns, and proximity to other schools which might be interested in involvement in stage 2.

In the second stage (and in line with the original study design), six further Victorian schools were identified on the recommendation of the Country Education Project, on the basis of:

- limited current VET development
- interest in future VET development
- interest in participating in this study
- geographical proximity or socio-economic similarity to a stage 1 school

Thus the sampling of schools was:

	Stage 1	Stage 2
Victoria	8	6
Queensland	4	–
South Australia	2	–

The schools selected for participation in this research project are given in the appendix to this report.

Limitations

Due to the extended resource allocation in stage 1 and in order to allow more schools to be involved in the study, it was decided to continue with the initial intention that all six schools in this second stage be located in Victoria.

The Queensland schools were contacted and interviewed at a Country Areas Program conference in Queensland, providing a cost-effective means for gathering data, but limiting the range of personnel able to be interviewed.

In stage 2, schools were involved in course development for a relatively short time, a situation which limited the extent of useful information they were able to provide.

Tasks

Stage 1

Phase 1—Initiation

During this stage the following tasks were completed:

- finalisation of project agreements and reporting procedures
- establishment of project management group
- identification of key individuals and groups who were able to contribute to the research
- identification of schools to be involved in documentation stage (phase 2)
- identification of relevant research and resources which would to contribute to the project

Phase 2—Documentation of existing practice

During this stage the following tasks were completed:

- development of detailed plan for case study documentation
- contact with schools involved in the documentation stage

- planning and conduct of initial visits to schools and interviews
- preparation of draft case studies and return of these to school contacts for verification
- commencement of analysis of documentation and identification of key elements of successful VET programs in small rural schools
- identification of schools to receive information relating to successful strategies (for stage 2)

Stage 2

Phase 1—Dissemination of information on effective VET programs/ strategies in stage 1 schools

During this stage the following tasks were completed.

- liaison with schools involved in this stage
- provision of support to new schools in the development and implementation of their local action plan
- assistance from school communities with links to key agencies and organisations
- completion of summary report by schools on the implementation of their plans

Phase 2—Final report

During this stage the following tasks were completed:

- analysis of all the documentation from case studies
- identification of key elements of successful strategies
- development of draft of final report, including description of research process, results of case study documentation, results of VET programs developed and any ongoing plans for schools VET programs
- preparation of draft of final report for comment
- refinement of final report based on feedback received
- presentation of final report

Study questions to schools

During this study two sets of questions were forwarded to schools.

In the first stage, the operation of VET (in its broadest sense) was examined in fourteen small rural schools and their communities in three States, all of which had been recommended as having quality practice.

Information was gathered from these schools about:

- their history of development of work/vocational education
- the place of vocational education within school objectives and charters and within the school's overall educational goals
- the range of current programs and approaches across the school (that is, across Years 7–12, [where appropriate, P–12], and across all students)
- the targetting (if any) of programs to specific students, and the rationales for this
- the identified local reasons for vocational education and the promoting/facilitating forces operating locally
- the identified and emerging barriers (both local and wider) and approaches developed to overcome these
- the perceptions of vocational education within the school and its community

- the range of support mechanisms used (local, regional, State, national)
- future perspectives, including funding and other support required

The short case studies emerging from these questions were then made available for use by other small rural schools interested in developing their practices; that is, those in the second stage. At this stage, the study asked these schools to report on:

- their consequent development of work/vocational education
- the range of current programs and approaches across the school (that is, across Years 7–12, [where appropriate, P–12], and across all students)
- the identified local reasons for vocational education and the promoting/facilitating forces operating locally
- the identified and emerging barriers (both local and wider) and approaches developed to overcome these
- how the information provided assisted the development of practices in these schools

Data collection

All schools in the stage 1 study were contacted to seek their co-operation in the project. For Victorian and South Australian schools, suitable times for face-to-face interviews (at the school) with school-selected key personnel were arranged—with principals, co-ordinating teachers, careers' advisers, parents, students and industry representatives. It was intended to introduce participant 'case writing' (reflective participant writing and responsive commentaries) during these interviews and request participants to engage in some writing tasks following the interviews.

Issues of teacher work-load were raised by schools. Schools were keen to be involved in the study but did not wish to impose additional demands on staff. It was therefore decided to collect information around the study issues outlined above and the researchers would write case studies based on the interviews. These case studies were then returned to schools for verification, comment and clearance by those interviewed.

In Queensland, a similar process took place, except that all interviews were carried out with personnel while they were attending a Country Areas Program conference. As noted above, this limited the range of data sources available to the study for these schools.

In stage 2, the six schools who had been provided with material from the first stage to develop VET programs were recontacted by phone after a period of three months. They were asked to provide a written report on the background and development of VET programs which had occurred within the structure of this study.

Case study analysis

The data collected within each school were firstly organised, as far as possible, into a common structure. There were variations within school programs and situations limiting consistency, but as far as possible the format of case studies was consistent (some headings are omitted where no local data were available):

The headings adopted for the case studies were:

- background
- course development (process)
- course descriptions
- work placement
- cluster (where appropriate)
- students

- perceptions of VET by:
  - school
  - parents
  - students
  - industry

Data from interviews addressing the specific study themes were then presented for each school under the following categories:

- factors facilitating course development
- barriers to course development
- partnerships (for example, employers and schools, schools and TAFE)
- industry placements
- changes and developments to participation in VET programs
- apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

Data across the schools were analysed under these six headings to identify similarities and variations.

In stage 2, similar attempts were made to organise the reports provided by the schools under consistent themes. This has been limited by the different activities undertaken by these schools, the progress made within the study's timeframe, and the relative importance that these schools placed on process and outcome issues. From their reports, however, this study has attempted to provide (where possible) a further analysis of the reports of:

- factors facilitating course development
- barriers to course development
- changes and developments

Issues related to the processes of this study; that is, how they reported that they had used the information and support provided were summarised under the heading 'impact of this project'.

Themes from case studies

Context

Victorian schools

In Victoria, vocational education and training program development has occurred within the historical context of a move (in the early 1980s) away from the 'traditional' model of secondary schooling being shared between high schools and technical schools. This has, however, meant that some schools maintain relatively well-established technical facilities, while others have fewer resources in this area.

As attention has moved to the development of formal relationships between vocational education and training and the VCE through the VET-in-Schools program, this historical difference has directly impacted on whether schools have offered 'training modules' within their existing staff and physical resources, or have entered into arrangements with other schools or a 'training provider'. Initial funding had been provided to schools for students undertaking the VET-in-Schools program, with the expectation that this funding level would decline over several years, and that operation of such courses would be supported within schools' global budgets. A recent decision has been made to hold 1999 funding at the same level as for 1998.

The existence of Australian Studies (a compulsory unit) and (a more recent addition) Industry and Enterprise within the VCE has served to provide strong opportunities for the consideration of work issues within the senior curriculum.

Recent changes to the VCE, to be introduced by the year 2000, will again alter relations between schools and training providers, as vocational subjects gain parity with other subjects

Queensland schools

In Queensland, vocational education subjects are embedded within the subject area specifications (SAS). To be eligible for tertiary studies, students must complete five Board of Secondary School Studies (BOSSS) subjects; however, VET subjects are not embedded within these board subjects. A typical subject load for OP students (those targeting tertiary entrance) would be five board subjects and one VET subject; the VET subject however does not contribute to the OP (tertiary entrance score). Students who are not interested in tertiary entrance can undertake a wider range of VET subjects and fewer board subjects. Thus non-OP students can attempt any combination of board and vocational subjects, for example, three board plus three vocational subjects.

Unlike recent developments in Victoria, there is no credit transfer for work completed within board subjects towards the completion of VET modules. All VET subjects are done within the school timetable as a discrete subject.

The Board of Secondary School Studies accredits schools individually with private provider status. The board develops log books with input from industry, and students take these to their work placements. Schools are free to modify these log books to suit individual needs.

The BOSSS administers the VET-in-Schools program with the Education Department providing 100 per cent of the staffing salaries for VET provision. Students from schools no longer attend TAFE for training not provided by the school. Students are given

exemptions from the same or similar modules that may be undertaken during an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Schools determine their priority for VET in their school and resource it accordingly. Departmental grants have been provided to schools to resource VET subjects (for example, $100 000 was provided to equip the hospitality kitchen at Capella). These were one-off payments, however, with schools having to identify their top two priorities in relation to vocational education. Allocations and grants were dependent on available resources.

South Australian schools

In South Australia, vocational education subjects at Years 11 and 12 are embedded in the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE). Stage 1 of the certificate is undertaken at Year 11 level with stage 2 being undertaken during Year 12. Three types of subjects are available at Year 12:

- Publicly Examined Subjects (PES)
- Publicly Assessed Subjects (PAS)
- School Assessed Subjects (SAS)

Students intending to undertake higher education are required to complete five full-year stage 2 subjects, of which four must be either PES or PAS subjects. At Year 12, vocational subjects qualify as SAS subjects.

In vocational subjects, students complete modules towards a certificate or future traineeship but cannot achieve certificate level in any of the vocational areas. The subjects are described as vocational pathways.

Vocational education at Years 11 and 12 has been funded through the Ready Set Go program in South Australia. Funding, which began in June 1997 is provided for establishment costs, such as resources, assessor training, planning time and contacts with industry. Funding for work placements is also made available through the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation.

Outcomes from stage 1 case studies

The information provided in these 14 case studies is now analysed against the six themes of the study identified in the previous chapter. Some common factors emerge that address these issues.

In many instances the comments made by the individual school about the specific research topics have been included.

Factors facilitating course development

From the case studies a number of factors emerged as being strong facilitators of successful VET course development. These were: formal commitment to VET; organisational and leadership support; past experience of success; existence of physical resources; existence of staffing resources; community resources; community support for work placements; allocation of time; and clustering. Each of these factors are considered below.

Formal commitment

Where schools have a formal, official and specific commitment to vocational education and training, course development and operation is more likely to be successful.

Schools report on this commitment being illustrated through:

- statements in the school charter and the related charter action plans
- a cross-curriculum approach to vocational education
- a broad conception of vocational/work education from Years 7 to 12

Organisational and leadership support

Schools point to the importance of school community support for programs, both within the school and in the wider community.

Identified issues of value are:

- obtaining the funding available, as well as offering support and advice about developments in VET at a State level
- timetabling arrangements to facilitate students' programs (particularly when several schools are involved in a cluster)
- an understanding of and commitment to programs within the whole staff and in the school council
- the knowledge, support and leadership of the principal

Past experience of success

Success breeds success. If courses are shown to be delivering results, then they are more likely to be accepted and supported. Some of the successes identified include:

- students gaining apprenticeships on the basis of workplace experience, ahead of other students
- local recognition of the value of the skill increases in employees
- students seeing outcomes from schooling
- decreased behaviour management problems

Availability/existence of physical resources

Where schools already have the teaching resources to offer courses, or are able to identify and gain access to these resources at little cost, they have a head-start.

Such resources include:

- necessary technical equipment and qualified staff
- well-developed and clear course packages/manuals

Availability/existence of staffing resources

The existence or appointment of staff with specific skills, training and interests has been identified as vital to successful program operation. Where the appropriate staffing hasn't existed, schools have supported teachers to undertake training.

Schools point to:

- identification of existing staff with industry and/or small business experience to fulfill the requirements of the VET course
- the appointment of a VCE (or equivalent) co-ordinator with VET training
- staff undertaking both specific teacher training and workplace assessor training with the school paying for this training

Community resources

Schools highlight the importance of identification and availability of community-based resources and note the significant connection between community resources and the school as a powerful impetus of course development.

Reference was made to the importance of the:

- number of potential work placements available in the area
- close proximity of the school to a large source of work placements
- development of local contacts for the provision of classroom materials

Community support for work placements

While having a source of work placements within enterprises is necessary, a partnership with enterprises must also be developed to ensure that perceptions of mutual benefit exist.

Schools identify:

- goodwill between the school and local industry as a major factor in the success of programs
- the need for flexibility in internal organisation to accommodate employers needs
- block placements for helping industry to know what students' abilities are
- employers familiar with the young people and their families
- the school perceived as looking after the broader needs of the students, providing a base level of training for local industries, and creating a productive community

Allocation of time

Successful operation of courses requires organisational time. Schools report that it is important to have someone specifically designated as VET co-ordinator. Access to an external source of funds for a position such as this is also necessary.

They suggest:

- a realistic time allowance within school allotments
- a locally based co-ordinator for work placements
- application for ASTF funding for a cluster co-ordinator

Clustering

Many of the schools which have offered successful vocational education programs have done so as part of a cluster. A solution such as this is not without its problems; however, the advantage of a cluster is seen to be that:

- schools work together to actively promote VET in their schools and communities
- small schools receive help and support from larger schools
- resources are shared

Barriers to course development

Schools pointed to the substantial barriers that exist to the successful operation of vocational education and training within small rural communities. Some of these are listed below and represent an absence of the facilitating factors (listed above), but other specific issues are also identified across these case studies.

Issues posing barriers to course development include: difficulties faced by staff keeping up to date with information about, and understanding VET; centralised curriculum control; internal organisation; availability of work placement; costs; availability of staffing and other resources; time; resource conflicts between VET and other senior studies; travel; and cluster co-ordination.

Difficulties found by staff keeping up to date with information about, and understanding of VET

A number of schools noted that changes to course arrangements made keeping up to date with VET issues difficult. In the light of the importance of staff sharing a commitment to course development, other schools pointed to the lack of understanding of VET by staff and the lack of information and professional development for them.

The schools noted:

- ongoing confusion and uncertainty within schools
- a lack of understanding of VET by the general teaching staff

- a lack of appropriate professional development for staff
- a perception that tertiary education is still preferred by students and parents, therefore promoting the need for schools to provide what is necessary for tertiary entrance

Centralised curriculum control

Vocational courses were perceived to be determined and assessed remotely, away from the control of teachers in schools. This was seen as making more complex the process of adapting training programs to meet individual students' needs.

In elaboration of this issue it was emphasised that:

- the centralised control of curriculum (content and approach of training packages) was perceived as implying that young people's individual educational needs were not examined
- students do not see a link between VET and their eventual/future jobs

Internal organisation

Faced with external uncertainties and lack of commitment, administrative issues pose difficulties. Without a commitment to solving them, these difficulties become substantial barriers. Administrative issues identified as being problematic were:

- the prescriptions for assessment of competencies within non-VET subjects have restricted timetable options and raised concerns as to how this would operate with increased numbers of subjects
- organising various subject teachers to cover the assessment of competencies within their classes
- enabling students to select modules provides an organisational nightmare for the VET co-ordinator
- operation of VET courses with only a small number of students exerts a major influence on the structure of the whole timetable
- timetabling across several schools—as more subjects are offered across a cluster, then individual timetables become correspondingly more inflexible
- a lack of timetable flexibility in releasing students for work placements
- a negative perception of VET by some teachers resulted in a timetable within which students were unable to take their preferred VET subjects
- resources such as books, tests and videos weren't ready so that the teacher had to devise both the training program and the resources

Availability of work placements

For small rural communities, the largest concern expressed was with the availability of appropriate work placements—which should be at the core of VET courses.

The schools reported:

- the lack of possible industries to cater for work placements, especially in regions of industry decline
- finding work placements difficult without a wide range of contacts in the area
- finding suitable employment, particularly in specific industry sectors, and of a suitable and safe nature for young people

Where work placements were found, other difficulties were also identified:

- work placements were hindered by a lack of communication between the school and the employer, and a lack of information about course requirements (length of placement, skills and work opportunities to be covered, work available within the placement)
- differences in skills and expectations between the work placement and the training modules

- in 1999, the training packages will change the way that competencies are assessed. An increasing number of competencies will now be assessed in the workplace rather than through other classroom studies. This will take a lot of time for the VET co-ordinator to organise and will require a change in the role of work placement
- co-ordination of work placements at an area or regional level (where several schools compete for scarce resources) is also a concern without a workplace co-ordinator
- public liability cover in work placements has created some concern

Costs

Many schools cited the costs associated with offering VET as a major barrier. Various components of these cost were identified. They ranged from the direct and actual dollar costs involved, to the implied disproportionate use of resources for different numbers of students, to the cost of equipment and other resources. Projected decreases in funding (for example, policy decisions in Victoria to progressively reduce and eliminate subsidies to schools to support operation of VET in schools) were identified as making sustainability an important issue.

Schools pointed to costs in areas of:

- the costs involved for a school to either purchase a training service from a registered provider or to become a registered training organisation (RTO)
- the cost of access to an RTO if VET training cannot be provided on the school site
- the need for schools to combine to ensure viable numbers of students to meet costs efficiently
- the direct cost involved for each student in the program, particularly with only a few students doing each subject
- a high cost in the provision of materials, including the basic course documentation
- the high cost of consumables in some VET subjects meaning either increased demands for parental contributions or the re-allocation of funds from other subject areas
- the work required to locate and collect materials
- termination of ASTF seeding grants for part-time cluster co-ordinators
- promotion of VET within the community
- costs associated with travel, teacher release and the production of written materials

Availability of staffing and other resources

Successful programs have relied upon the availability of committed individuals and staff with specific skills, and on the availability of specialist equipment.

Schools highlighted some of the staffing and resource difficulties:

- difficulties in finding human and physical resources to operate programs
- difficulties in replacing specific teachers (after transfer or retirement) in order to continue with courses
- difficulties in attracting and keeping qualified staff in small rural and remote schools as the teachers need to be skilled across a range of areas
- the reliance on the skills and enthusiasm of particular individuals for course development and operation
- lack of qualifications of existing teachers
- loss of staff who had been supported by the school through training
- specific needs for facilities, for example, an industrial kitchen or appropriate work placement to offer the facilities needed
- access to specialist equipment is difficult

Time

Development of VET courses is time- and resource-intensive, particularly when balanced against the numbers of students involved in courses. Where these resources are not provided, sustainability is a serious issue.

Areas where time was identified as an important barrier included:

- time was required to develop courses; to organise and make contact with work places. Without formal time allocation, the 'huge amount of work' becomes a deterrent to ongoing and consistent staffing
- no specific time allocation was made within a school for sorting out course requirements and locating resources; this task was incorporated within another work load
- where there was no time allowance to develop the VET courses, there was also no regional or central co-ordinator to contact about resources or problems. Thus difficulties emerged in knowing who to contact to obtain resources

Resource conflicts between VET and other senior studies

Concern was expressed that development of VET courses occurred at the expense of being able to offer other subjects. VET courses need adequate numbers of students to make them viable. There is a perception among some teachers however, that VET courses are being offered to small numbers of students. This was both a direct limitation (for schools faced with limited resources) and a point of conflict and contention within schools.

Schools highlighted the following issues:

- VET subjects are provided at the cost of other senior subjects, so to increase the number of VET subjects would limit the number of other subjects that could be offered
- having to provide teacher time for small VET classes
- subjects compete for numbers of students, in particular, there is competition between academic and vocational sections of the curriculum where it is perceived that if students do VET, then numbers are taken away from other (academic) subjects
- the prioritising of VET within the school can take funds away from other areas of the school
- internal priorities on deadlines mean that students experience difficulties with keeping up with work in other subjects because of work placements etc.
- with more than one VET course running, the teaching and assessment of VET competencies requires a duplication of work, as each VET subject has slightly different requirements

Travel

In rural and remote areas, transport to training courses and to work placements is frequently difficult. Where schools cluster to provide courses, difficulties in travelling between schools becomes an issue. Schools mentioned travel difficulties in the areas of:

- students coming from other schools to a cluster centre, where the students have to travel on a number of buses. This results in decisions not to take subjects or in significant absenteeism rates from subjects
- lack of a sustainable and funded bussing system within a cluster
- lack of public transport options
- large distances to the nearest TAFE provider
- travel to small and dispersed work places
- specific difficulties for outlying students
- unreliability of attendance when parents had to provide transport
- attendance at meetings because of the remote nature of some schools

Cluster co-ordination

Where schools cluster to facilitate provision of VET courses, co-ordination problems have emerged.

Issues identified included:

- the need for a cluster-wide timetable and flexible individual school timetables to allow for travel within the cluster
- a cluster co-ordinator can be seen as supporting schools in favour of larger centres

Partnerships

The number and variety of partnerships initiated by rural schools was seen as a key element in the establishment of successful VET programs in rural schools. These partnerships included those between school and school, school and TAFE and school and industry.

School–school

Because of difficulties experienced by these schools in the operation of VET courses due to location factors, there has been advantage in developing strong partnerships with other schools. Most of these partnerships are manifested as 'clusters' to facilitate delivery of subjects, co-ordination of work placements, timetabling and travel, and sharing of staff.

Schools reported:

- sharing of video-conferencing facilities
- co-ordinated VCE (or equivalent)/VET course delivery
- operation of a cluster centre to co-ordinate timetabling, buses, allocation of staffing time to run programs
- a high technology cluster using communication technologies to deliver VCE classes to smaller schools
- sharing of TAFE teachers
- sharing of resources, equipment, course planning days, workplace assessment
- co-ordination of work place agreements
- co-ordination of local education–industry links

School–TAFE

Partnerships with TAFE have been less frequently reported and where they exist have not been strong. Few school–TAFE partnerships are the result of both the absence of appropriate TAFE resources locally, and (often consequently) by a desire of schools to develop their own training provider status. Some of the comments reported by schools have been:

- existence of a cluster centre has meant that purchase of training from TAFE has not been pursued
- 'close and flexible arrangements' with TAFE, particularly with TAFE Outreach, developed to deliver training
- distance from the nearest TAFE an issue; the school aims to develop RTO status itself
- costs of access to TAFE led to inter-school partnerships to create viable numbers of students
- no TAFE provider in town
- strong working links with TAFE in training of teachers as workplace assessors, in TAFE approval of teacher-delivered programs, and provision by TAFE of course components, particularly when there is a need for specialised equipment and teaching

School–industry

Schools generally reported partnerships with industry only in a limited sense. In general, there are effective and substantial individual relationships between schools and local industries, but these are seen as contributing to school programs through, for example, industry acceptance of work placements.

On the other hand, there are a couple of examples of more detailed and formal partnership arrangements where stronger and mutually beneficial relationships have been developed. In these cases, schools and industry have worked together to develop initiatives, rather than one being seen as contributing to the other's programs.

In relation the school–industry partnerships, the case-study schools made the following point in relation to limited arrangements:

- industries perceived as providers of work placements
- good though informal relationships with local industries
- the school sees itself as developing courses to suit industry needs
- school and local industry have jointly developed modules and student expectations
- good communication between the school and industry around work placements but no formal arrangements
- VET seen as being supportive of local industry training needs
- strong links with supportive local industry around work placement, in which employers interview students
- partnership with a professional association as a private provider

And in terms of more extensive partnerships, the following examples were given:

- a joint venture, characterised by strong arrangements around provision of specialist training services and work placements where an active role in the selection of the students providing the opportunity to train the students for the industry
- ongoing communication in the joint development of guidelines governing work placements
- joint establishment of a work placement process
- a strong partnership between the school and the industry training council involving statewide management, co-ordination and steering committee, teacher training, and industry training (for work placements) at the local school, jointly developed

Industry placements

Overwhelmingly, these schools report on difficulties in finding adequate work placements in their local communities. This has resulted in the development of some particular arrangements: organisation of work placements (where they exist locally) on one day per week, substantial travel and block work placements sometimes during holidays.

The strength of personal contacts in small communities has been identified as a valuable resource. Where personal networks exist, employers are positive about work placements whereby they are able to identify and 'test' potential future employees.

Schools made the following comments in relation to placement availability in their school:

- a lack of possible industries for work placements
- a lack of suitable work placements a strong issue in the area
- finding appropriate work placements in a small town a problem
- few opportunities exist for work placement in an economically depressed area
- several possible work placements available in the area

The following comments from schools indicate the variety and diversity of placement structure and process as noted by the schools:

- 20 days work placement per year for all students
- a one-day per week work placement
- workplace training for one day per week, linked with students' VCE units and specific work requirements
- Wednesdays are timetabled for Year 11 work placement and VET subjects, although they are also carried out in students' own time
- Years 11 and 12 have two weeks of work placement per year, with one week in school time and one week in holidays
- six weeks over Years 11 and 12, with four weeks in Year 11 and two weeks in Year 12
- one day a week work placement at Year 11 level, and an evening work placement at Year 12
- students miss classes during work placements
- students have work placements for one day per week in different areas; students are also on a range of work placements and courses at the end of the year
- work placements generally occur in the school holidays
- work placements are undertaken in a block during holidays
- due to a shortage of local work placements specific to industry areas, students undertake work placement in four one-week blocks—two during school times and two during holidays
- work placements occur in Year 11 to avoid pressure on Year 12 studies
- work placements are also offered in Years 9 and 10 both for students lacking motivation within the traditional curriculum and for those who are very focussed on a particular work area
- in Year 11, a work placement subject is offered in partnership with local businesses

Schools made the following comments about the importance of contacts and communication in relation to work placements:

- the importance of personal networks in locating work placements
- work placement agreements assisted by the local co-ordinator
- group training engaged to assist with locating and arranging work placements
- service clubs and a local workplace training co-operative manage work placements across the catchment area; some students find their own work placement but this is very difficult as the students are extremely isolated
- a small rural community facilitates personal contact and students are known by employers
- even within a small community, there are issues of a lack of information about technical requirements of work placements, expectations of nature and standard of student work, assessment of competencies, and availability of work for students
- work placements are seen as possibly leading to future employment
- students gained apprenticeships through workplace experience in preference to students who had limited workplace experience

Transport was found to be an important consideration in relation to placements, both as the following comments from schools highlight:

- distance to the nearest industry providers severely limits the development of work placements, both in student access, and in co-ordination of arrangements
- students have to travel some distance for work placement blocks
- work times do not necessarily fit with school bus timetables
- the school bus, shared with two other schools, is available for travel to work placements

Changes and developments to participation in VET programs

Case-study schools from stage 1 reported substantial developments in their VET programs in recent years. While some have an extended history in related areas, and have been innovators prior to the development of central, co-ordinated programs, recent initiatives include increases in community acceptance, an extension of commitment from the school's executive, and greater staff involvement in creation and implementation of programs.

The individual schools report on a range of recent developments in their schools. These include:

- the introduction of VET-in-Schools programs within the VCE
- the appointment of a new principal with a strong commitment to VET
- the formalisation of VET in school policy and priorities
- designation of VET as a priority with the school charter with specific goals
- staffing commitments to VET, both in terms of appointments and in supporting training of staff as qualified workplace assessors
- local modification of VET to meet the needs of the school and its curriculum, including offering some modules within the Year 9–10 elective system
- development of strong school–industry links
- joint work between the school and industry representatives on work placement procedures
- industry-initiated developments
- increased support from parents and students following positive local publicity
- increased support and flexibility of arrangements due to staff involvement in VET decision-making

Other schools report a more qualified development:

- discussions about State level changes around curriculum/training areas and around issues of assessment in work placements
- the school sees itself as an 'academic' school, however, vocational education is listed for discussion

Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

A number of the case-study schools have found that part-time New Apprenticeship programs offer great flexibility. They build on students' actual and potential part-time employment, enable regular or block work placement and provide direct links to future employment. They have been particularly valuable in rural communities because they are organised individually and therefore do not necessarily rely on schools' establishing a 'class group' of students and they can particularly build on farm and other rural employment.

Other comments from schools in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships encompass the following issues:

- consideration of New Apprenticeships for a few male students at risk of not completing Year 12 using family farms as the work placement
- participation in a pilot New Apprenticeships program around a Rural Skills Traineeship through a group training company: work placement of one day per fortnight, training at the local Agricultural College and VCE at the school
- enthusiasm to extend New Apprenticeship arrangements with Year 10 students from secure farm backgrounds
- difficulties with part-time traineeships in finding suitable employment in situations where students are not living on family farms

- New Apprenticeship program with work placements for one week per term plus one week in holidays
- a small New Apprenticeship program with four students
- work placements critically linked to obtaining apprenticeships at the end of Year 12
- VET programs clearly seen as leading to future industry apprenticeships

Outcomes from stage 2 case studies

The case studies from stage 2 of this project centred on an additional six schools in rural Victoria conducting VET programs. In this section of the report it is not our intention to explore in depth the common issues emerging from these six schools, the aim of the previous section, but to summarise the results of the process whereby information on the stage 1 case studies was passed to this group of case study schools to assist in their development of VET programs.

Therefore only a brief overview of the issues arising from stage 2 case studies, under the topic themes identified for the stage 1 case study schools, is provided below.

Factors facilitating course development

Facilitating factors similar to those identified in the stage 1 study cases emerge in these further schools. A number of these relate to the educational history of the schools themselves and their interest in developing VET, and include the following factors:

- history of development of school-based courses at senior level
- strong interest from some students and families
- teacher perception of need in terms of future student cohorts
- school leadership commitment to enhancing curriculum and career options for students
- awareness of gaps in curriculum provision for some students

Other facilitating factors relate to initiatives taken by the schools during the course of this study:

- the leadership role of school administration in both initiating and supporting participation within the study
- provision of professional development, including visits to other schools
- support for partnerships with other schools and institutions, including group training and TAFE
- promotion of the benefits of VET within the school community
- provision of resources and support
- links with pilot New Apprenticeship programs
- development of staff support, including flexibility for student 'absences'
- the success of initial program development
- transformation of part-time job commitments into work placements

A number of factors relating to the small size of the schools have facilitated development. These include:

- significant and close links between the school administration and the wider school community
- closer relationships between teachers and students
- increased flexibility in responding to student needs

Barriers to course development

A number of the barriers listed by schools were common. Others emerged as the schools in stage 2 began to implement VET programs, largely confirming those identified by the schools in stage 1.

Program operation has been restricted by:

- a lack of suitable work placements
- the time taken to set up, promote and monitor programs, for example, phone calls, meetings
- the small numbers of students electing to take up VET, which has limited resource allocation
- concerns about ongoing funding and the sustainability of courses
- the lack of suitably qualified staff to deliver VET
- the distance to the nearest TAFE college

Some students have not taken up VET courses because:

- they see it as restricting their subject choice within the VCE
- preferred courses have not been offered
- a commitment to training conducted during holidays, travel, study at another school or institution, and work placement
- too much regular and substantial travel to undertake training

Staff resistance to VET courses has been a significant barrier, due to:

- competition between VET and traditional VCE subject offerings which could threaten the viability of these subjects
- limited time for co-ordination

Partnerships

VET in these stage 2 schools is at a relatively early stage in its development. Few of these schools report any partnerships, although they have become part of local clusters or share VET classes.

Industry placements

The arrangements made for work placements for these schools developing VET arrangements were similar to those observed in stage 1. Work placements were organised for one day or one afternoon per week or in one-week blocks. Some students completed work placements during school term and some during term holidays.

With New Apprenticeships, arrangements were more flexible, with students working one night a week and on a Saturday morning, and completing training during three days at TAFE in each of the school holidays.

Changes and developments to participation in VET programs

Substantial changes in the participation in VET by these schools was noted during the study. These changes included:

- review of the school charter and development of a more specific VET policy
- priority to retain VET-related studies within the curriculum despite low choice by students
- exploration of New Apprenticeships

- development of VET programs in association with school clusters by arrangements with training providers
- development of a VET course as a night class for parents, teachers and students
- investigation of virtual delivery of training courses
- promotion of programs to the school community through information sessions, Year 10 student seminars and newsletter publicity
- increased liaison with prospective employers
- substantial increase in numbers of VCE students enrolled in VET-in-Schools programs or pre-apprenticeship programs
- increased confidence, motivation and organisational skills in students undertaking VET courses

Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

Several of the schools involved in stage 2 of this study have begun to investigate the provision of part-time New Apprenticeships for their students. During this process a number of local pilot programs have been implemented, although there have also been some difficulties in locating specific employers to meet student demands.

Schools have noted that:

- employers have been more receptive to joining as industry and enterprise employers rather than offering New Apprenticeships, mainly because of the lower cost and commitment level
- parents value New Apprenticeships more because the concept is familiar to them and is closer to a full-time apprenticeship than a VET certificate
- some parents have the impression that their child has had difficulty coping with the VCE and therefore could not cope with the VCE and another VET certificate. They perceive a part-time New Apprenticeship on the other hand as more practical and therefore more achievable
- schools believe New Apprenticeships are more achievable than VET certificates; there are not the same problems of credit transfer, filling out registration forms and the large amount of paperwork necessary for one student
- travel to a cluster school or to TAFE for a few hours every week is seen as difficult for some students because of the distance and the lack of public transport. Attendance in blocks of three days, as in the New Apprenticeship Program, is often more achievable as students can stay with family or friends or make other arrangements

Outcomes of change and development resulting from stage 1

It has been difficult to determine how many of the activities conducted by stage 2 schools are directly attributable to the support provided through this study, or whether much of it would have happened anyway. A number of the schools reported that resources (information, funds, support) were central to enabling them to carry out investigations, visits and writing. The school principal has a crucial leadership role in balancing existing and possible resources in the initiation and operation of school programs and the provision of further resources through this study to support schools undertaking these activities was a significant consideration in the school agreeing that it would undertake the additional work entailed.

In some cases, the information provided through this study prompted visits by schools to neighbouring schools, and these visits developed into joint action or into incorporation of similar processes. The opportunity to see good practice in operation and to read appropriate documentation of that practice, helped steer some of these schools through the change process.

The stage 2 schools reported on the outcomes from this study and on the processes they had used. They can be summarised as:

- VET initiation:
  - introduction of VET courses into school for first time
- VET development:
  - substantial growth in numbers of students in VET courses
  - extension of VET studies below Year 11
  - re-organisation of timetable structure for block work placement
  - development of a specific focus and a range of strategic initiatives to promote VET take-up
  - activities designed to increase the school's capacity to incorporate VET and target those students whose goal was vocational training, thereby providing them with the opportunity to undertake a diverse range of options
  - provision of time and financial support for individual program development
- VET formalisation:
  - review of the school charter and inclusion of a VET policy
  - expansion of VET opportunities for VCE students becoming a priority goal in the new school charter
  - allocation of priority resources within the school
- VET promotion:
  - promotion of VET as attractive option to students and parents
  - specific focus on promotion of courses
  - leadership in VET issues by senior staff
- VET co-ordination with others:
  - some combined classes with a school from stage 1
  - visits to and use of information from other schools
  - cluster development
  - investigation of VET alternatives in other schools
- VET reflection:
  - identification of similar barriers to those identified in stage 1
  - reinforcement of recognition of the difficulties involved in establishing class-size groups of students undertaking VET

Conclusions and implications

This study has had two broad objectives: firstly, to document a number of factors associated with the operation of vocational education in small rural schools and their communities, and secondly, to investigate whether such documentation of school procedures and practices in the area of VET, in this instance, in rural schools, could provide a useful stimulus to the further development of VET in other schools.

In the context of the study parameters the following have been identified:

Factors facilitating course development

The schools in this study report strong facilitators of successful VET course development as being:

- *Existence of a formal commitment*
  Where schools have a formal, official and specific commitment to vocational education and training, course development and operation is more likely to be successful. This commitment is frequently made through inclusion of statements in the school charter and in associated action plans. These documents provide a 'touchstone' by which future development can be driven; they also drive allocation of physical, time and staffing resources to the achievement of school-identified goals.
- *Leadership support*
  The support from school and community leaders has been the critical issue in determining the success of VET programs within these communities. Where school principals have shown an understanding of, commitment to, and leadership in the development of VET, and in the development of partnerships with industry or with other schools, courses have developed successfully.
- *Organisational support*
  Schools point to the importance of broad agreement and commitment within the school community for VET programs whereby VET programs are perceived as providing complementary resources to other areas of the curriculum.
- *Past experience of success*
  Success breeds success. If courses are shown to be delivering results, then they are more likely to be accepted and supported. Where past successful history of the school in relation to VET—its impact on specific individuals and groups of students—is documented and known, successful VET implementation is more like to be established within that school.
- *Availability/existence of physical resources*
  Schools which already have the teaching resources to offer courses, or are able to identify and gain access to these resources at little cost or with little student travel necessary, have a headstart in the provision of VET programs. The ability of students to continue with VET-related studies within a familiar and supportive environment is likely to enhance success.
- *Availability/existence of staffing resources*
  The existence or appointment of staff with specific skills, training and interests has been identified as vital to successful program operation. Where the appropriate staffing isn't already available, schools have supported teachers to undertake training, or have shared staffing resources by means of some form of clustering arrangement.

- *Availability/existence of community resources*
  Schools highlight the importance of the identification and availability of community-based resources and note the significant connection between community resources and the school as a powerful impetus of course development. Leadership from industry groups within the community in making these resources available to schools can be a significant factor in the viability of courses and in their acceptance within the community. Equally, the degree of awareness of these community resources by school-based personnel, and a willingness to develop linkages with them, influences their capacity to sustain VET programs.
- *Community support for work placements*
  While having a source of work placements is necessary for the successful operation of VET courses, mutually beneficial partnerships with those enterprises must also be developed. These partnerships identify future skilled workers, local training needs and promote greater awareness of employment opportunities offered by local industry.
- *Allocation of time*
  Successful operation of courses requires organisational time. The area of VET is both complex and dynamic. Schools report that it is important to have someone specifically designated as VET co-ordinator. This person's responsibilities would include course organisation, maintaining up-to-date information on procedures and needs, community and industry liaison and seeking external funding where relevant. It is important to have someone specifically designed as VET co-ordinator.
- *Clustering*
  Many of the schools which have offered successful vocational education programs have done so as part of a cluster. These cluster arrangements enable schools to make more efficient use of physical, staffing and curriculum resources, and have resulted in a greater variety of programs and are also more likely to be sustained.

Barriers to course development

The case study schools pointed to the substantial barriers that exist to the successful operation of vocational education and training within small rural communities. A number of these are summarised below. Specific issues are also identified across these case studies.

- *Keeping up to date with information about and understanding of VET issues by staff*
  A number of schools noted that changes to course arrangements made keeping up to date with VET issues difficult. In the light of the importance of staff sharing a commitment to course development, other schools pointed to the lack of understanding of VET by staff and the lack of information and professional development for them.
- *Centralised curriculum control*
  Vocational courses were seen to be determined and assessed remotely, away from the control of teachers in schools. Thus adapting training programs to meet individual students' needs was perceived as problematic and complex.
- *Internal organisation*
  Faced with external uncertainties and lack of commitment, administrative issues pose difficulties. Without a commitment to solving them, these difficulties become substantial barriers.
- *Availability of work placements*
  For small rural communities, the largest concern expressed related to the availability of appropriate work placements. Limited populations and limited numbers and types of industry physically accessible to schools, were seen as important limitations on course provision.
- *Costs*
  Many schools cited the costs associated with offering VET as a major barrier. Various components of these cost were identified. They ranged from the direct and actual dollar costs involved, to the implied disproportionate use of resources for different numbers of students, to the cost of equipment and other resources. Projected decreases in funding were identified as making sustainability an important issue.

- *Availability of staffing and other resources*
  Successful programs have relied upon the availability of committed individuals and staff with specific skills and on the availability of specialist equipment. Where these do not exist within the school community, schools have found it difficult to offer accredited and successful courses to their students.
- *Time*
  Development of VET courses is time- and resource-intensive, particularly when balanced against the numbers of students involved in courses. Where these resources are not provided, sustainability is a serious issue.
- *Resource conflicts between VET and other senior studies*
  Concern was expressed that development of VET courses occurred at the expense of being able to offer other subjects. VET courses need adequate numbers of students to make them viable. There is a perception however, that VET courses are being offered to small numbers of students. This was both a direct limitation (for schools faced with limited resources) and a point of conflict and contention within schools.
- *Travel*
  In rural and remote areas, transport to training courses and to work placements is frequently difficult. Where schools cluster to provide courses, difficulties in travelling between schools becomes an issue. Such travel arrangements imply the provision of funds for their support, organisational and curriculum flexibility, and allocation of sufficient block time to enable access to substantial training and work placements.
- *Cluster co-ordination*
  Where schools cluster to facilitate provision of VET courses, co-ordination problems have emerged; for example, rivalries around 'ownership' of resources, competition for scarce time or physical resources, apparently unco-ordinated demands on employers, poor communication of information and so on. Without a strong leadership commitment to, and support of cluster arrangements, the capacity of the cluster to assist with the provision of VET and other curriculum initiatives is greatly diminished.

Partnerships

- *School–school*
  Because of difficulties experienced by these schools in the operation of VET courses due to locational factors, there has been advantage in developing strong partnerships with other schools. Most of these partnerships exist as clusters to facilitate delivery of subjects, co-ordination of work placements, co-ordination of timetabling and travel and sharing of staff.
- *School–TAFE*
  Development of partnerships with TAFE have been less frequently reported and where they exist have not been strong. Few school–TAFE partnerships are the result of both the absence of appropriate TAFE resources locally, and (often consequently) by a desire of schools to develop their own training provider status.
- *School–industry*
  Schools generally reported partnerships with industry only in a limited sense. In general, there are effective and substantial individual relationships between schools and local industries, but these are seen as contributing to school programs through, for example, industry acceptance of work placements.

  On the other hand, a couple of examples exist of more detailed and formal partnership arrangements where stronger and mutually beneficial relationships have been developed. In these cases, schools and industry have worked together to develop initiatives, rather than one being seen as contributing to the other's programs.

Industry placements

Overwhelmingly, these schools report on difficulties in finding adequate work placements in their local communities. This has resulted in the development of a number of specific arrangements.

The strength of personal contacts in small communities has been identified as a valuable resource. Where personal networks exist, employers are positive about work placements whereby they are able to identify and 'test' potential future employees.

Changes and developments to participation in VET programs

The case-study schools from stage 1 reported substantial developments in their VET programs in recent years. While some have an extended history in related areas, and have been innovators prior to the development of central, co-ordinated programs, recent initiatives include increases in community acceptance, an extension of commitment from the school's executive, and greater staff involvement in creation and implementation of programs.

Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

A number of the case-study schools have found that part-time New Apprenticeship programs offer great flexibility. They build on students' actual and potential part-time employment, enable regular or block work placement and provide direct links to future employment. They have been particularly valuable in these rural communities because they are organised individually and therefore do not necessarily rely on schools establishing a 'class group' of students. Furthermore, they can particularly build on farm and other rural employment.

Development of VET practice

It has been difficult to determine the specific role that this study has played in the introduction and development of VET programs in all of the stage 2 participating schools. Nevertheless, these schools report that the outcomes of stage 1 have been useful in providing information and support in a practical form, enabling them to understand issues in course development. This has been particularly relevant to schools which have had little previous experience in VET development.

The outcomes from the stage 1 research study have been used by these schools to:

- investigate similar VET course developments
- initiate VET courses where none previously existed
- build on and develop existing VET courses
- formalise VET, particularly in school policies
- promote new and existing VET courses within schools
- co-ordinate VET courses with other schools
- reflect on factors influencing VET course development

Implications of research outcomes

This research has identified significant issues affecting the provision of VET in small rural school communities. Overall, there needs to be significantly more long-term planning and co-operative effort at all levels, to maximise opportunities for students, and reduce duplication of effort by schools.

The findings of this study have policy implications for the Federal Government and State Governments, and for government and non-government education systems. Future policies need to focus on providing a strategic framework and secure funding for the provision of VET in schools, with particular emphasis on understanding the needs of small rural school communities.

Issues relating to the implementation of VET in small rural schools have also been identified. To offer a range of VET programs, these schools need access to adequate resources and support systems. To develop the commitment of the school community to local provision of VET programs, a stronger focus on promoting community awareness and understanding of the value, processes and outcomes of VET is required.

The capacity of these rural schools and their communities to support VET programs is still little known understood. Further research is required; this should particularly focus on action research approaches to develop practice and knowledge. The focus of the latter part of this study has provided some indication of how such a reflective intervention can enhance current provisions.

The following specific issues are proposed for further action:

> *... schools pointed to the lack of understanding of VET issues by staff and the paucity of information and professional development for them.*

> *Specifically, there was concern that development of VET courses occurred at the expense of being able to offer other subjects. ... This was ... a point of conflict and contention within schools.*

Implementation of educational and awareness-raising programs for staff, school councils and school communities on the importance of offering students a range of study opportunities, including vocational education and training programs. These school community programs could also canvass flexible training options such as part-time study, and explore roles and responsibilities to emerge as part of a community commitment to increase student options.

State education departments should formalise a process with State training authorities to ensure the regular dissemination of up-to-date and relevant information about VET requirements to all secondary schools.

> *Many schools cited the costs associated with offering VET as a major barrier ... Projected decreases in funding ... were identified as making sustainability an important issue.*

State education departments need to document and resolve issues relating to the cost of provision of VET programs. Such actions would also result in the development of a schools sector policy position in response to the polices relating to fees and charges applied by all TAFE providers in the provision of VET in schools.

Security of funding for schools and clusters is a priority. In particular, since schools waste considerable amounts of time each year applying for funding of VET programs, there needs to be established assured, ongoing and co-ordinated funding for clusters of schools in rural regions.

> *For small rural communities, the largest concern expressed related to the availability of appropriate work placements ...*

Further initiatives need to be developed, in partnership with industry groups at State and regional levels to encourage support of VET program work placements. Support for the provision of work placements could be provided at a local level via appropriate teacher release to facilitate liaison with industry groups.

> *Many of the schools which have offered successful vocational education programs have done so as part of a cluster.*

> *... there has been advantage in developing strong partnerships with other schools. Most of these partnerships exist as clusters for delivery of subjects, coordination of work placements, co-ordination of time-tabling and travel, and sharing of staff.*

State education departments should support and facilitate the establishment and maintenance of clusters of schools for the provision of VET. This will entail a serious commitment to the resourcing of cluster personnel to enable the development of staff expertise and a higher retention rate of expert staff in the VET program.

The VET funding provided to schools and clusters in rural areas needs to take account of all costs in course provision, including teacher and student travel, accommodation where required, teacher release, and so on.

... schools and industry have worked together to develop initiatives, rather than one being seen as contributing to the other's programs.

Further examination and facilitation of industry-sponsored programs and partnerships aimed at supporting greater access for rural students to work placements should be undertaken. Industry needs assistance to provide more effective support for students on work placement; the documentation of quality practice would become models for adoption in other communities.

Development of partnerships with TAFE have been less frequently reported and where they exist they have not been strong.

Opportunities for partnerships between schools and TAFE based on recognition of mutual benefit should be created. Incentive programs for the establishment and maintenance of such partnerships between clusters of rural schools and TAFE institutes need to be developed and documented. In the first instance relevant issues could be raised through the development of a discussion paper which would then provide a platform from which to formulate key components of a strategy to promote school–TAFE partnerships.

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There need to be opportunities for partnerships between schools and TAFE that are based on recognition of mutual benefit. Incentive programs for the establishment and maintenance of such partnerships between clusters of rural schools and TAFE institutes need to be developed and documented. Initially, relevant issues could be raised through the development of a discussion paper which would then provide a platform from which to formulate key components of a strategy to promote school-TAFE partnerships.

References

Blunden, P 1986, *Students and work*, Participation and Equity Program, Melbourne.

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Appendix

This appendix contains the case studies from both stage 1 and 2 schools.

Stage 1 case studies

Camperdown Catholic Regional College, Victoria
Charlton Secondary College, Victoria
Corryong Secondary College, Victoria
Murtoa Secondary College, Victoria
Orbost Secondary College, Victoria
Tyrell College, Sea Lake, Victoria
Warracknabeal Secondary College, Victoria
Yarrawonga Secondary College, Victoria
Capella State High School, Queensland
Charters Towers: School of Distance Education, Queensland
Clermont State High School, Queensland
Moura State High School, Queensland
Keith Area School, South Australia
Kingston Community School, South Australia

Stage 2 case studies

Camperdown Secondary College, Victoria
Hopetoun Secondary College, Victoria
Nathalia Secondary College, Victoria
St Arnaud Secondary College, Victoria
St Mary of the Angels Secondary College, Nathalia, Victoria
Terang College, Victoria

Stage 1 case studies

Camperdown Catholic Regional College

School profile

Location:	approx. 200 km SW of Melbourne
School size:	270 students – co-educational (approx 50:50)
Ethnic background:	predominantly Anglo
Community growth:	declining

Background

This Catholic Regional College is one of two secondary schools (along with the Government Secondary College) located in Camperdown in Victoria's western district. There is no specific mention of vocational education in the Catholic Regional College's charter, though published material from the school identifies the school's vision and mission as 'to cater for the learning needs of all students and to keep abreast of contemporary educational developments'. The school sees itself (and is seen within the area) as an 'academic school', particularly in contrast to a nearby technical school which is seen to run a strong vocationally based program.

In fact, apart from a few 'special cases' in which students undertook school/work programs, there has been little history of any vocational education at the school prior to the introduction of the VET in Schools programs within the VCE.

Course descriptions

Vocational education and training still largely focuses on the operation of courses within years 11 and 12 (see below). Apart from these, the school organises work education for two periods per week for one semester at year 10, a one-week work experience for all students at each of year 10 and year 11.

At the senior levels, all vocational courses are available to all students and advertised through the school newsletter. Information nights are held to inform families and students about the courses.

The school currently offers Certificate 2 studies in Clerical and Administration and this course is delivered within the school. It includes one day per week at a work placement, where competencies outlined in the training package (which has been purchased from the Admin Training Company) are assessed. Other course requirements are completed at the school through assessment of competencies within English, Information Technology, Business Management and Accounting. No TAFE modules need to be purchased to complete the certificate.

The school says it would like to run the New Apprenticeship Program or Certificate 2 in Agriculture/Horticulture for a small number of male students in the school. This would be in the dairying industry. Particularly targeted here is a small group of boys who are at risk of not completing year 12 and who would like to return to the family farm to work.

Work placement

Currently, two of the three girls have work placements: at the shire office and at the hospital. As yet the school has not been able to find a work placement for the third girl. They have engaged Western Victorian Group Training to help with this process, although the school initially felt that the Group Training Company concentrated mainly on regional areas.

Cluster

While the Catholic Regional College works in co-operation with Camperdown College for the delivery of some VCE courses, they are not members of any cluster for the delivery of VET programs at this stage. While there is a regional network cluster, the College's perception is that this doesn't seem to be very active and has been hard to access because of communication and time difficulties.

The students

Three female students are currently enrolled in Clerical and Administration. They were selected in order to encourage them to continue at school until the end of year 12. Involvement in VET was seen as a way of developing their confidence in work and other situations. They were asked to discuss doing VET with their parents. The VET Co-ordinator (also the Deputy Principal) gave the Administration course book to the students to read with their parents so they could see the relevance of the Certificate.

The VET Co-ordinator helps students co-ordinate their VET study, work placement and their VCE subjects. He monitors how they are going in all their subjects and will advise them if they feel that they are having difficulties keeping up. This may become an issue for the students as they are out of the school on work placement for one day per week and so miss timetabled subjects for that day.

Perceptions of VET

Industry

The Finance Manager at the Camperdown Hospital is the industry contact. The Deputy Principal phoned him to introduce the program and to discuss its background, aims and timelines. The student was introduced to the staff at the hospital, and initially did a block placement for one week in the school holidays, which then developed to one day per week for the rest of the year.

Staff are required to do some assessments in the workplace. They have looked at specific sections of the course; the student will undertake training with a staff member for a specific skill, complete the task together, then do the skill by herself and complete an assessment when feeling confident. Staff are happy to rehearse skills with the student and spend time with her.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Easy accessibility: The Admin Training Company package is appealing to and manageable by the school. This has made development of the course possible, as all the resources that are needed and the lists of required competencies are in the package. This is seen as particularly important in the absence of any local TAFE provider.
- Regional support: The support at a State/Diocese level has been important for the development and continuation of courses. This supports obtaining the funding available for each VET placement, as well as offering support and advice about developments in VET at a State level.
- At the workplace: The Admin Training Kit is well set out and easy to understand and follow. The manager felt he would be lost without the manual.

The initial one-week block placement helped the hospital to know what the student's abilities were.

2 Barriers to course development

- Course development complexity: No specific time allocation has been made within the school for sorting out course requirements and finding resources. This has been incorporated within the Deputy Principal's workload.
- Timetabling: Prescriptions for assessing competencies within other subjects have restricted timetable options. Operation of a single VET course with only three participants has a major influence on the structure of the whole timetable. There were concerns as to how they would accommodate more subjects if they required a greater number of subjects to provide such assessment of competencies.
- Work placements: Finding work placements has been difficult without a wide range of contacts in the area. There are transport difficulties for outlying students. The students are also experiencing difficulties with keeping up with work in other VCE subjects.
- 'Credit transfer': There were difficulties involved with organising the English, Information Technology and Accounting teachers to cover the assessment of competencies within their classes.

3 Partnerships

- Cluster co-operation: there are some limited partnerships between local schools in VCE/VET course delivery.
- Industry: arrangements are school-based, with industries perceived as providers of work placements rather than as contributors to decision making about VET.

4 Industry placements

- Structure: The general pattern is for a one day per week work placement.
- Personal contacts: The importance of personal networks in locating work placements is stressed. Where these do not exist, there has been considerable difficulty in locating appropriate placements.
- Group training: Western Victorian Group Training has been engaged to assist with locating and arranging work placements.
- Transport: Transport to work placements causes difficulties, as work times do not necessarily fit with school bus timetables.
- Time management: The timetable is such that students miss classes during work placements. This can cause difficulties in communication and also in keeping up with other VCE work.

5 Changes

- The introduction of VET in Schools programs within the VCE have been the major changes in the school's provision of VET.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

- New Apprenticeship Program: The school is starting to consider the organisation of New Apprenticeships for a few male students at risk of not completing year 12. This will use family farms as the work placement.

Charlton Secondary College

School profile

Location:	approx. 225 km NW of Melbourne
School size:	200 students P – 12; co-educational: 50:50
Ethnic background:	Anglo
Community growth:	rapidly declining

Background

The school has identified the development of vocational education programs as a priority within the school's charter over the last three years. The new Principal has a strong commitment to vocational education and training.

Vocational education is seen as a way of retaining students and providing a meaningful education for them. Starting in year 9, the school has a strong focus on work experience for students. At this level, the students fundraise to subsidise the cost of travelling to Melbourne for their work experience in year 10. At year 10 there is a Careers subject and the school runs Industry and Enterprise at year 11.

Course development

Initially there was a management committee set up to facilitate the organising of the VET program. This committee consisted of representatives from each of the cluster schools who then reported to school-based curriculum committees. There were five meetings of this group. One teacher reports spending up to 70 hours per week to get the programs operating.

Course descriptions

The VET subjects offered in years 11 and 12 are offered through the Cluster Centre:

- Certificate II in Agriculture (Farming)
  (3 students from Wedderburn, 2 from Boort, 1 from Macaulay College)
- Certificate III Info Tech (5 students from Charlton)
- Certificate II Hospitality (no students in 1998)
- Certificate I Electronics (1 student from Wycheproof)
- Certificate I Engineering (2 students from Macaulay College, 2 from Charlton)
- Certificate II Automotive (3 students from Charlton)

Each school in the cluster separately organises for competencies to be taught and assessed through VCE subjects. This means that arrangements differ between sites.

In 1998, all students doing VET also do the VCE subject that relates to that VET subject. For example, a student will do VCE Systems (4 periods a week) and VET Auto (4 periods a week). A student will have some competencies assessed within the VCE Systems subject, with VET modules not covered within systems being completed in the 4 periods of VET Auto. A student from any of the schools within the cluster will do these specific subjects at the Cluster Centre at Charlton on either a Tuesday or a Thursday when the students are bussed in from the other towns for their VCE and VET subjects. At the student's own school, on the other days of the week, the student will study the other VCE subjects that include competencies that are needed for particular certificates.

At Charlton, to cover competencies within English and Maths, the students do three VCE English classes and two VET English classes. The instructional part of the VCE is done in the three days that all students are present. The students not doing VET, undertake self-directed VCE English work in the other two classes, while the students doing VET do two periods of

VET English to complete the necessary modules. There was a concern that such 'credit transfer' was seen as token by the students, which was why the two periods of VET English was developed.

At present there are qualified staff available to take the VET subjects, as the school is recognised as a provider by the Board of Studies.

Cluster

Charlton Secondary College is part of a cluster of schools which also includes Secondary Colleges at Donald, St Arnaud, Wedderburn, Pyramid Hill (P–10), Boort, Wycheproof, Charlton and Macaulay College CRC.

Charlton itself has two campuses—the College and the Tech Centre—which are located about 2 km apart. On the College campus there are 200 students (P–12). At the Tech Centre or Central Cluster Centre, 90 students bus in from other cluster schools to attend classes on a Tuesday and Thursday. It caters for students from years 9 to 12. These classes have a technology and vocational education focus. In the past, the Cluster Centre has run T11 and T12 courses which each provided a strong vocational focus, with students then going into an apprenticeship or to employment. With the end of these separate courses, it was felt that the academic focus of the VCE had not catered for these students. The introduction of VET in the VCE was viewed positively as a response to this.

All schools in the cluster allocate a percentage of their overall teacher time to the Cluster Centre to run the Technology, VCE and VET programs.

The students

In general, the students reported that they chose VET because the subjects were more practical than other schoolwork and could help with getting a job in the area in which they were interested. Students placed great value on having work placements to make the theory and their school work more relevant and to develop contacts that may lead to future work. The students were enjoying the work placement, so they still felt the course was worthwhile.

Perceptions of VET

a) Schools

The way that the different schools in the cluster perceive VET has defined the way that VET has been promoted in the different schools. For example careers teachers from two of the schools in the cluster did not attend cluster meetings, and without the support of these careers teachers, there was a lack of information given to the students in those schools. Even if their students wanted to do VET, there was a lack of administration support (e.g. in timetabling) to make it happen.

At the end of last year, a larger number of students were interested in taking up VET courses, but at the start of 1998 there had been a drop off in the numbers actually enrolling.

There is still a strong perception in the community and amongst the students that University is the path to take. Students are encouraged by teachers and parents to take traditional VCE subjects. On the other hand, VET within VCE was seen in a positive light as it would add legitimacy to the subjects if they were weighted as VCE subjects, and not just providing an additional 10% to the Tertiary Entrance Ranking (TER).

b) Teachers

There are declining enrolments in many of the schools in the cluster which is reflected in pressures on staffing numbers. If students elect to do VET subjects, that takes them out of the school for up to two or three days per week and the decline is exacerbated. There is also a large cohort of maths/science teachers within the schools, amongst some of whom there is a concern that their jobs may no longer be viable in individual schools as enrolments fall.

c) Parents

The one parent interviewed had no idea what VET was when her two sons came home and said they would be 'doing VET'. Subsequently, however, she has seen the positive results of her son doing the VET Auto course. She was worried that her son wouldn't stay on at school but 'he now has a focus' and she hopes it will lead to an apprenticeship.

d) Industry

Industry representatives interviewed were positive about being involved in the work placement program, and were happy to fit in with what was needed by the school. Because of the particular nature of the industries (Engineering, Automotive), they were aware of safety issues for the students in allocating work to them.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Pre-existence of resources on-site: The existence of the Cluster Centre, with all the technical equipment necessary and qualified staff, has been a strong positive. In particular this has meant that the Cluster hasn't needed to buy training provision from TAFE for the subjects being taught. (In 1997, when Hospitality was available, Wimmera TAFE was the registered provider for some of the modules at the school.)
- Time-tabling commitment: The Acting Principal at Charlton (who develops the time table) is committed to working out the timetable from the premise of what was necessary for the students, rather than the timetable dictating what was available for the students.
- Allocation of a time allowance: The VET co-ordinator has a one-day a week time allowance. The school is now applying for ASTF funding to pay for a half-time co-ordinator across the cluster, a position which is currently carried out on a voluntary basis by a Charlton teacher.
- Local control of work placements: The individual schools arrange the work placements, with the careers teacher placing students at Charlton. Being in a small country town meant that the employers knew the young people who came for work experience. They knew their parents and had seen the students at local sporting events for many years. This facilitated work placement (and possible future work) of those students who were seen as having 'a good attitude'.

2 Barriers to course development

- Inefficient staff allocation: Having to provide teacher time for the small VET classes that are currently operating was seen as a major barrier to further course development.
- Costs: In 1999 there will be changes to the learning outcomes that are needed, involving a change to the ways in which competencies are assessed. For the school to provide the modules necessary to complete the certificates, the school would either have to become an Registered Training Organisation (RTO), through the Office for Training and Further Education (OTFE) (and there would be significant time and cost involved) or have Wimmera TAFE as the registered provider (again with significant cost involved).
- Travel: Travel within the cluster is a problem for some students coming from the other schools to Charlton. The students have to travel on a number of buses to reach Charlton. Because of this, there has been a significant absenteeism rate for students attending the cluster or possibly students have decided not to take subjects due to the travel involved.
- Timetable co-ordination: There needs to be a cluster-wide timetable developed, as well as flexible individual school timetables to allow for travel to the Cluster Centre. This involves a great deal of co-ordination and co-operation between the different schools. Problems were encountered in some of the schools where a negative perception of VET by some teachers resulted in a timetable within which students were unable to take the VET subjects that they wanted to choose.

- Time allowances: Initially, there was no time allowance to develop the VET courses. There was no regional or central co-ordinator to contact about resources and problems and thus there were difficulties in knowing who to contact to get resources.
- Lack of preparation: The students doing Auto felt that the course had started too soon: the books, tests and videos weren't ready and that the teacher had to make the course up.
- Work placements: Work placements were hindered by a lack of communication between the school and the employer. For example the employers were not sure about how many days of work placement the students were meant to do or how long the students would be coming for. Nor were they sure about what was expected of the students in the workplace and whether they were providing them with the skills and work opportunities that were necessary. While they would find a guide booklet very useful (with the competencies listed so that they could then allocate tasks to be completed), they were also concerned that the work that the students could do was dictated by what was there at the time. There was no time to set up special jobs for the students.

3 Partnerships

- Cluster Centre: The most significant partnership is that between schools in operating the Cluster Centre. This has involved timetabling co-ordination over two days a week, co-ordination of buses, and allocation of staffing time to the Centre to run programs.
- Schools–TAFE: The existence of the Cluster Centre has meant that purchase of training from TAFE has not been pursued.
- Schools–industry: Industry provides work placements, but has little broader role.

4 Industry placements

- Local control: Individual schools arrange work placements, using local connections. A small rural community facilitates personal contact and employers know students.
- Communication: Even within a small community, there are issues of a lack of information about technical requirements of work placements, expectations of nature and standard of student work, assessment of competencies, and availability of work for students to do.
- Student response: Work placements are enjoyed and seen as increasing the relevance of schoolwork; they are also seen as possibly leading to future employment.

5 Changes

- The appointment of a new Principal with a strong commitment to VET is seen as vital to the development of VET in the school, especially its formalisation in school policy and priorities.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

No comments made.

Corryong Secondary College

School profile

Location:	approx. 325 km NE of Melbourne
School size:	300 students: co-ed: approx 50:50
Ethnic background:	Anglo, very small NESB population
Community growth:	fairly stable

Background

The school has a strong ongoing commitment to deliver VET programs. The school charter for 1997–1999 specifically designates Vocational Education and Training as an area for improvement, with one task in the charter action plan being the achievement of provider status in Engineering and Hospitality by the end of 1998.

For the past 20 years the school has had a strong vocational education background. In the years 7–10, the school was described as still teaching as technical schools used to teach, with a strong focus on skill development in the technical subjects, rather than focusing on more 'theoretical' areas such as design. There are several teachers at the school with an industry background. A work experience program at year 10 links into work placements within VET programs.

Course description

Corryong has two senior VET programs:

- Engineering: five year 11 students and four year 12 students (all male)
- Hospitality: 29 year 11 students and four year 12 students (mainly female).

The students complete a range of modules in the Hospitality course but few students complete the full Certificate II. Both the staff involved are qualified TAFE teachers and have time in lieu to teach the TAFE modules.

Corryong has a close and flexible arrangement with Wodonga TAFE in delivery of the two VET streams. There is a TAFE Outreach building at the school which also runs night courses in a range of fields including Engineering for people in the town. Hospitality is run outside school hours from 3.30 pm to 5.30 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with the occasional Sunday class to make up the 120 hours. Engineering is run on Wednesday from 1 pm till 5 pm. The fact that the course is run out of school hours makes it possible for many students to do it and not have timetabling conflict with their other studies.

The school also offers a wide range of technical subjects (e.g. Auto) through the VCE syllabus. These are mainly offered to cater for 'students at risk'. They do not offer the corresponding VET subjects because it would require extra modules which would then increase the workload for the students.

The VET co-ordinator is still developing a system for teaching and assessing VET competencies within VCE subjects. This means obtaining TAFE tests that the teachers can administer within subjects, or requiring students to undertake the tests in their spare periods. There are no log books that the teachers are able to fill in. The co-ordinator does not want to place pressure on staff and so maintains much of the organisation of assessing competencies himself. He has developed a time tabling system that tracks which modules specific students are doing and which subjects are teaching and assessing VET competencies. This is a very complicated system which relies heavily on the work of the VET co-ordinator to administer it.

Work placement

At present, none of the VET students do work placement. A relationship has not yet been developed with Hospitality industries in Corryong—negotiating with local industry takes a great deal of time which the VET co-ordinator does not have at the moment—and the next nearest Hospitality industry is 45 minutes travel away. Some students do work experience as a holiday placement or block release.

The VET co-ordinator is also the workplace co-ordinator. There is some ASTF funding but there is no separate co-ordinator as yet. This is planned to happen in the near future, with funding and appointment for two days per week. Not being able to provide work placement has restricted the level of ASTF funding.

Cluster

Corryong clusters with Tallangatta and Mt Beauty Secondary Colleges. In 1997, video-conferencing operated within the Hospitality course between Corryong and Tallangatta. It is possible to run theoretical units by video-conferencing but not the more practical units. Next year, Corryong is hoping to video-conference with Mt Beauty as well.

The students

VET Hospitality has been marketed well within the school as a useful course for those students intending to go on to tertiary studies. It is promoted as a course that will help these students find employment while they are at university. Because of this, a large number of the students do certain of the modules of the Hospitality course. Engineering is seen as being for the students interested in a trade while Hospitality is geared to the more academic students.

The outcomes for the Engineering students have been very positive. Most of the students are getting jobs or apprenticeships in the engineering area e.g. at the Snowy Mountains, General Motors, Uncle Toby's and Tumut.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Commitment: VET is a priority in the school charter's action plan.
- Staffing: There are staff with a strong industry background; there is a school history of 'technical' and practical subjects.
- Marketing: Hospitality has been marketed strongly and is seen as a positive option for students going on to tertiary studies.
- TAFE Outreach: Provision of night time courses in the town overcomes some timetabling problems.

2 Barriers to course development

- Staffing: If either of the current staff were not available within the school, it would be very difficult to replace them and so continue with the courses. Professional development of other teachers would then become an issue.
- Organisation: While the current approaches provide an opportunity for students to do a selection of modules, this provides an organisational nightmare for the VET co-ordinator. How reliant is the system on a particular individual? Who would take on that role if the present VET co-ordinator were not available?
- Work placement: The lack of possible industries to cater for work placements has been a problem at Corryong for some time. A lack of flexibility within the timetable to release students has also contributed to the absence of other arrangements for work placements.

In 1999, the training packages will change the way that competencies are assessed. An increasing number of competencies will now be assessed in the workplace rather than through other classroom studies. This will take a lot of time for the VET co-ordinator to organise and will require a change in the role of work placement.

- Resource conflicts between VET and VCE: At this stage, and with the present level of funding, VET is sustainable within the school. Even though VET has funding attached to it on a per-student basis, there are other costs associated with it that must be met according to the overall curriculum offering of the school. This has meant that VET subjects are provided at the cost of other VCE subjects. To increase the number of VET subjects would limit the number of VCE subjects that could be offered.

3 Partnerships

- School–school: Limited partnerships through sharing of video-conferencing facilities operate within the cluster.
- School–TAFE: A 'close and flexible arrangement' with Wodonga TAFE enables delivery VET. In addition, there are close links with TAFE Outreach at the school in providing community courses at night.

4 Industry placements

- Lack of placements: A lack of possible industries for work placements and a lack of timetable flexibility for student release have drastically restricted work placements.
- The distance to the nearest industry providers severely limits the development of work placements, both in student access, and in co-ordination of arrangements. This means that work placements are done in a block during holidays.
- Workplace assessment of competencies will pose significant challenges to the viability of programs.
- Work experience and VET work placements are linked.

5 Changes

- VET is designated a priority with the school charter with specific goals towards developing provider status in two industry areas.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

No comments made.

Murtoa Secondary College

School profile

Location:	approx. 260 km NW of Melbourne (in Wimmera)
School size:	220 students
Ethnic background:	Anglo
Community growth:	Stable

Background

Murtoa Secondary College has been active for many years in the development of vocational education programs both in the local area, the region and Statewide.

The school was one of a small number of schools who initially trialled students undertaking workplace training for one day per week, linking their activities there with their VCE Units and specific work requirements. This occurred in 1991 for targeted students at risk but was broadened in 1992–93 to include and be offered to all students on a semester basis. (The organisation and written material of this program has been widely documented by the Careers Education Association of Victoria (CEAV): Careers Newsletter July 1994, Vol. 22 No. 3; and presented at a number of forums.)

The 'School Work Project', as it was called, lasted from 1991 to 1996 in this form and involved approximately six to nine students per semester in a variety of work placements.

This project was in addition to a more traditional work experience of one-week block release for Year 10 students (in October in the local area) and Year 11 students (in August, in Melbourne or regional centres or interstate if appropriate: see Education Age 17 Sept, 1996).

Course development

In 1996–97, the school was a pilot school for developing documentation relating to the Key Competencies, and in particular to their achievement in the workplace by a student on an extended work placement. A Work Journal developed as part of this pilot was adopted by the CEAV and produced commercially.

The two main areas of contention in this pilot were the assessment and reporting of the Key Competencies, in particular the issues of degrees of competence and who is qualified to assess (and this debate is still occurring).

Both these aspects encouraged the school to accept the new VCE Study of Industry and Enterprise where students undertake their work placement as Work Requirement 2 in each of Unit 1 and 2, completing mutually identified and agreed upon industry and/or key competencies. Murtoa undertook this new VCE Study in 1997 and continued in 1998.

In 1998, the school became part of a pilot for the New Apprenticeships Scheme with one (nearly two) students being involved in the Rural Skills Traineeship where the student is employed with a farmer, through a Group Training Company, for one day per fortnight, paid award wages, undertaking training at the local Agricultural College (Longeranong) and completing their schooling at Murtoa SC. Warracknabeal Secondary College and Horsham College are the other two main school partners in this pilot. The school is very keen to extend this VET program as it has a number of current Year 10 students from secure farm backgrounds who wish to participate.

Course descriptions

Currently Murtoa is not undertaking any specific VET in Schools programs and has posed a set of questions about their needs were they to do so.

In 1998 Murtoa offered students the opportunity to undertake Certificate II in Music Skills (through Ausmusic) which was to be delivered by a local provider (HUB in Horsham) but the students were not keen. Perhaps this initiative was too new?

For 1999, three VET in Schools programs are being included in the school's VCE Handbook which is issued to all Year 10 Students: Certificate II in Hospitality, Certificate II in Automotive, and Certificate II in Ausmusic. The school will attempt to deliver the programs (and the VCE Units) that students select. If there is sufficient interest (the actual cut off numbers depends on staffing availability for delivery and costs for VET), then the programs will run. The delivery method will, in part, determine the costs, which may influence numbers and so on. VET programs may run in place of or in addition to current VCE Units—this depends on how the equation of staff/students/choice/costs delivery comes out.

There are changes currently underway at the State level concerning the style and type of delivery of VET courses:

- whether they are curriculum based or training based; and
- issues of the workplace component and assessment and recording;

and the implications of these are still to be thrashed out.

The students

As indicated in its Vocational Education Policy, Murtoa Secondary College is keen to offer VET programs to its students. As a rural-based school, Murtoa says it needs to offer courses and training applicable to local needs as well as preparing students for further education i.e. University; it needs to provide a variety of pathways for students.

VET programs will be offered to all VCE students and, if appropriate, also to Year 10 students (Rural Skills students in 1998 were Year 10). As identified in its history, the school is very much in favour of providing vocational experiences for its students. Student choice, along with sustainability of programs (costs/staffing/delivery assessment), will determine which VET programs will run at Murtoa SC.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Success in outcomes: Murtoa students have gained apprenticeships using their workplace experience from the School Work Project. They have obtained these positions in preference to students who had the (then) Dual Certificates (VCE/TAFE) but limited workplace experience. The school believed (and still does) that the School Work Project better prepared a student for the workplace than some VET programs with little or no workplace learning.
- Appropriate staffing: Just recently the school appointed a new VCE Co-ordinator who is also an Agriculture and Horticulture Teacher and the current Rural Skills Traineeship co-ordinator (teacher on TRIP program) and the school may be able to run a VET Program in Agriculture and Horticulture.

  In 1997 two staff undertook Workplace Assessor Training (in their own time) and are now qualified workplace assessors.

  The Materials and Technology (Food) teacher undertook Hospitality training (in 1998) and is now qualified to teach and assess the Introductory Modules. The school paid for this training at a cost of over $500. The Automotive teacher and the Materials and Technology teacher also underwent regional training on the VET issues and the delivery of VET modules (generic based training).
- Community recognition: It is recognised that the better trained and educated the local farmers are the better they can cope with change.

2 Barriers to course development

- Administrative uncertainty: Ongoing confusion, costs and uncertainty have all been factors in why Murtoa has not fully embraced VET in Schools in the past.

- Work placements: The most difficult aspect of the part-time traineeships is finding suitable employment, which is not usually a problem in the rural situation as family farms or companies employ the students. The two Murtoa students were the only non-farmers in the program and the second has not been able to secure employment.

  Co-ordination of work placements at an area or regional level is also a concern however just recently an ASTF application for a Workplace Co-ordinator was successful.

- Funding: The total numbers of students for the part-time apprenticeship program are restricted due to lack of funding. Each student in the program costs approx. $2500 (not including wages paid to them).

- Staff training: Staff training is an issue, especially for a small school that doesn't have a history of being a technical school or having technical teachers. Who will teach and assess VET modules if the school wants to deliver them themselves?

3 Partnerships

- Some industry partnerships are beginning to be explored.

4 Industry placements

- Initial trials: The school has been at the forefront of developing workplace training for one day per week, and linking these activities with students' VCE Units and specific work requirements through the 'School Work Project'. This initially involved a small number of 'at risk' students.

- Students gained apprenticeships through workplace experience in preference to students who had limited workplace experience. The role of work placements is strongly endorsed by the school.

- Documentation: The school developed a Work Journal around Key Competencies for students on extended work placement.

5 Changes

- The school is still discussing and responding to State level changes around curriculum/training areas and around issues of assessment in work placements.

- The school has made staffing commitments to VET, both in terms of appointments and in supporting training of staff as qualified workplace assessors.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

- The school has taken part in a pilot New Apprenticeships Program around a Rural Skills Traineeship through a Group Training Company. Work placement is one day per fortnight, with training at the local Agricultural College and VCE at Murtoa SC. The school is keen to extend this, with Year 10 students from secure farm backgrounds who wish to participate.

- There have been difficulties in the part-time traineeships with finding suitable employment in situations where students are not living on family farms.

Orbost Secondary College

School profile

Location:	approx. 320 km E of Melbourne (Gippsland)
School size:	300 students
Ethnic background:	Predominantly Anglo, a few Koori, and second generation Italian and Greek
Community growth:	Logging industry in decline, farms rationalised

Background

The school does not have a strong context for vocational education. Vocational education is not specifically mentioned in the school charter although it is on the agenda to be discussed within the school. Although it may be seen as a priority by some of the school staff, there is also some opposition to its inclusion in the charter by some members of the School Council who have a strong tertiary education focus and appear not to be in favour of 'diverting funds' to vocational education.

On the other hand, the school had a technical component from 1976 with a range of vocationally oriented apprenticeship programs being provided in the past. Although there have been elements of vocational education in the school's history, this has waned in the last ten years with the implementation of the VCE. This has meant that subjects such as Technical D and D are seen to have become more formal and academic rather than vocational. The Principal feels this has led to an increased drop out rate among students who could not find a path through the more academic curriculum, although this has not been substantiated.

Work experience for all students is now provided at year 11 (previously it was at year 10 but because of the work experience component of Australian Studies, introduced seven years ago, work experience was moved to year 11). Years 9 and 10 participate in a Work Education unit that includes careers, finding work and leaving home.

In 1998, all year 10 students will be surveyed, with the students being asked to prioritise VET programs in order to decide which units will be provided next year. The school surveys parents of year 10 students as well as providing an information night for them.

Course descriptions

The VET subjects offered in 1998 are:

- Certificate II Automotive (3 students in year 10, 5 students in year 11);
- Certificate II Clerical and Admin (2 students in year 12);
- Certificate II Horse Studies (5 students in year 10, 3 students in year 11);
- Certificate II Tourism (3 students in year 11).

The school is trying to develop Forest Industries to support local area industries. Plans in this area are highly dependent on adequate funding from the Department of Education.

Work placement

The students need to be highly motivated and dedicated because it is necessary for them to give up their own time to complete the work placement. VET and work placements also extend to years 9 and 10 where it is targeted at students who are lacking motivation within the traditional curriculum as well as for students who are very focused on a particular work area.

Cluster

Orbost Secondary College works in a cluster with Bairnsdale SC, Swifts Creek SC, Nagle College, Cann River P–12, Lakes Entrance SC and Mallacoota P–12. It is historically a High Technology Cluster that has used communication technologies to deliver VCE classes to the smaller schools.

The majority of the schools have agreed to pool the Department of Education funds given to the school to run VET programs. In addition, the cluster has ASTF funding to employ a Cluster Co-ordinator who is based at Bairnsdale SC. He tries to visit the cluster schools at least twice a term.

The Cluster supports the practical operation of VET in the individual schools. For example, the TAFE teacher for Auto at Bairnsdale travels to Orbost (which is 100 km from the nearest TAFE campus) every Wednesday to teach Auto. The cluster is now looking at how to extend this, in order to develop Auto in the smaller schools next year. One possible approach is to set up a caravan that can take the program to the smaller schools. If Auto is developed in this way, the TAFE teacher will then travel to Swifts Creek once a week and to Mallacoota once a term.

At Orbost Secondary College, each Wednesday is left clear for year 11 to complete their work placement and VET subjects, whereas Bairnsdale SC is known to have their VET day on Fridays. Orbost did not want to 'give the students a long weekend'.

The students

Students self-select for VET programs, and are then counselled about their selections. One student has not gone on to year 12 because of a job offer after doing Auto in year 11. On the other hand, the specific VET strands offered have attracted some girls from private schools who want to do Horse Studies.

Perceptions of VET

a) School

VET is still seen as an 'add on'. As a result of this, most VET courses are done in Year 11 with all the work placements in Year 11 so that it will not impinge on year 12 studies. The school has traditionally promoted tertiary studies and any work-related studies have been seen as a second option. The promotion of tertiary studies is now seen (by some) to have given students false expectations in relation to their future careers and ignored the need for a diversity of skills.

b) Parents

Parent perceptions are reported to be that VET is not 'real school study' and that forest industries have no future.

c) Industry

The local mechanic is very positive about the work placement program. All of his apprentices have come through this program. The school approaches him and then he selects the student for work placement. There is a good relationship with the school and he services a number of the school vehicles.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Cluster: The advantage of the cluster is that all the schools work together to actively promote VET in their schools. It makes running VET in very small schools possible with the help and support of the bigger schools.

2 Barriers to course development

- Restricted numbers: VET needs numbers of students in this area to make it viable. There is difficulty in getting students to take up VET, as many students do not see a link between VET and ongoing jobs.
- Resources: There is a lack of suitably trained staff and access to specialist equipment is difficult. The distance to the nearest TAFE is too great.
- Work placements: There is a lack of suitable work placements e.g. the Hospitality venues are perceived to be very sexist workplaces in Orbost, and there are no work placements available in Engineering or Electronics.
- Transport: Lack of transport is a major obstacle in the delivery of VET where there is no suitably qualified instructor on site. An example of this occurs with the eight students at Orbost doing Horse Studies. In Term 1, the students needed to travel to Bairnsdale once a week for instruction. The Principal drove the school bus, leaving Marlo at 6.45 am to get to Nowa Nowa at 7.45 am so that the students could catch the school bus to Bairnsdale. The Principal would then drive the school bus to collect them from Bairnsdale in the afternoon and arrive at Marlo at 5.15 pm. This was provided free of charge.

  In the second term, the majority of the instruction is through video-conferencing and by local delivery. There are only a couple of occasions when the students need to get to Bairnsdale and it was left to the parents to organise the transport this time. However, a number of the students didn't make it.
- Timetabling: Even the timetabling required to include four schools in video-conferencing is a major hurdle. As more subjects run collectively across the cluster, the more inflexible the individual timetables become.

3 Partnerships

- School–school: Orbost Secondary College is part of a High Technology Cluster using communication technologies to deliver VCE classes to smaller schools. All schools work together to actively promote VET in their schools, and this assists the operation of VET in very small schools through sharing of TAFE teachers.
- School–industry: There are good though informal relationships with local Industries and the school sees itself as developing courses to suit industry needs.

4 Industry placements

- Work placements occur in year 11 to avoid pressure on year 12 studies.
- Wednesdays are timetabled for year 11 work placement and VET subjects, though they are also carried out in students' own time.
- Work placements are also offered in years 9 and 10 both for students lacking motivation within the traditional curriculum an for those who are very focused on a particular work area.
- A lack of suitable work placements is a strong issue in the area.

5 Changes

- The school has recently seen itself as an 'academic' school: however, vocational education is agenda to be discussed within the school.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

No mention made.

Tyrell College, Sea Lake

School profile

Location:	approx. 325 km NW of Melbourne (Mallee)
School size:	160 secondary students
Ethnic background:	Anglo, very small NESB population
Community growth:	decline in numbers, farms rationalised

Background

At Tyrell College, there is a commitment to vocational education within the school charter, with a view to broaden the opportunities for all students. At a senior level, the College developed dual recognition of studies between VCE and TAFE three years ago. The number of students from the school taking up tertiary studies had started to decline, so the school tried to develop an orientation towards giving the students a stronger industry focus within courses.

Both the School Council and parents are reported to support the vocational education directions offered at the school. They believe industrial experience is highly relevant to student needs. They see it as an opportunity they would have liked themselves.

The staff of the school are also very broadly supportive of the program and this support enables the requirements for vocational education learning outcomes to be spread across a wide range of subjects.

Course development

The first course developed was Certificate II in Engineering; in 1998, 12 students from years 11 and 12 are studying this. Originally they tried to develop the course according to the matrix of subjects offered by the Board of Studies, but encountered major difficulties. A small rural school could not offer the specified wide subject range over units 1, 2, 3, and 4. Advice and support from a Secondary College in Geelong recommended abandoning the formal requirements and modifying the course according to the needs of the school and its curriculum. The College and local industry jointly developed the original modules and their expectations of students.

Course descriptions

Other VET subjects offered are Certificate II Information Technology (which half of the year 11 students choose) and Certificate II Automotive.

The school aims to expand the courses offered each year. Different courses such as Office and Admin are listed as possible subject offerings at the end of year 10, but as the subjects finally offered are determined by student choice (as with other VCE subjects), if enough students do not select it, a subject will not run. The timetable is flexible and there are no difficulties in slotting subjects in and out. On the other hand, Hospitality was mentioned as being too difficult to offer, due to the need for an industrial kitchen and because of the lack of work placement in the area that could offer the facilities needed.

The College has modified the 'prescribed' VET program by offering some of the modules within the year 9–10 elective system. Some of the national broad based modules are used to expose the students at this level to the VET curriculum through Unit 1 of some VCE subjects. For example Unit 1 Materials and Unit 1 Systems are taken at year 10.

Work placements

The students do work placement in four one-week blocks for Engineering. Two of these weeks occur in school times and two weeks in school holidays.

Students go to Swan Hill, Bendigo and Warracknabeal (to the Grain Elevator Board) for work placement in Engineering, as there is very little Engineering work placement in Sea Lake.

The New Apprenticeship Program scheme will have students doing work placements one week per term plus one week in their holidays. The College was not keen to have students out on placement for two days per week because of feared implications for loss of some of their global budget.

Cluster

The school is in a cluster with Manangatang P–12 School, Swan Hill SC, MacKillop College (Swan Hill), Kerang SC and Tooleybuc SC. This cluster plays an important role in maintaining VET within the College. It shares resources, equipment and planning days on courses and workplace assessment.

A cluster project officer is funded full time by ASTF. She administers and runs the cluster, provides curriculum resources, liases between schools, and provides work placements and assessment.

As Tyrell College is 200 km from the nearest TAFE, it will be necessary for the school to have RTO status in order to provide VET courses when changes to VET in the VCE are implemented. The school currently has provider status from the Board of Studies but will also need to obtain RTO status from OTFE. The cluster will apply as a consortium to OTFE to be an RTO. This will reduce the cost for each school. For example, if a school applies individually to be an RTO, the school has to pay $500 per subject per year, whereas this same fee can be shared by the whole consortium. As all the schools in the cluster have small numbers of students involved, this is a necessary and valuable cost saving.

The students

The school does not define VET subjects as appropriate for problem students. In order to choose Engineering, the students need to take Unit 2 of Maths, Physics, Information Technology, Graphics, Systems and Materials. This has meant that some students who would not normally choose Physics now do so. The subjects needed also cater for students who want to go on to tertiary study.

The courses and their expectations are promoted at year 10. The VET co-ordinator organises past students who are now doing a trade to return to the College to open students' eyes to the expectations of the particular trades. For example, one past student who is now a boilermaker, tells the students that he wished he had done Maths Method to help him with his trade. It shows the students that doing a trade is no less academic than the tertiary option and that Maths is necessary.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Appropriate staffing: Course development was aided by the Vocational Education Co-ordinator having 30 years' industry and small business experience and also having TAFE accreditation.
- Contacts: The Engineering teacher has contacts who provide their scrap to the College. He also gives his time to drive to Swan Hill to collect this scrap metal for the students.

  The VET co-ordinator developed contacts in surrounding areas early in the process of course development. This facilitates work placements and, in fact, local industry rings the school seeking students.

2 Barriers to course development

- Cost: There is a high cost to the College to run Engineering e.g. in the provision of welding materials.
- Facilities: Some areas, such as Hospitality, have specific needs that cannot be met locally e.g. an industrial kitchen or appropriate work placement that could offer the facilities needed.

3 Partnerships

- School–school: The school is part of a school cluster which shares resources, equipment and planning days on courses and workplace assessment.
- School–TAFE: The school is far from the nearest TAFE and thus aims to develop RTO status itself as part of a consortium.
- School–industry: The school and the local industry jointly developed modules and student expectations.

4 Industry placements

- Due to a shortage of local work placements specific to industry areas, students do work placement in four one-week blocks—two in school times and two in holidays. Students have to travel some distance for these.

5 Changes

- VET programs have been locally modified to meet the needs of the school and its curriculum, including offering some modules within the year 9–10 elective system.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

- The New Apprenticeship Program has been introduced, with work placements for one week per term plus one week in holidays. The school didn't want students out for longer periods, fearing they would no longer be counted as full-time students.

Warracknabeal Secondary College

School profile

Location:	approx. 290 km NW of Melbourne (in Wimmera)
School size:	286 students
Ethnic background:	predominantly Anglo – some NESB
Community growth:	stable – crop-dependent

Background

The overall school policy, as represented in the school charter, explicitly incorporates vocational education. The school has a goal to offer a comprehensive education to all students and this includes vocational education.

The school has a substantial history of vocational education, having offered T12 in the past and having a number of trade qualified teachers on the staff.

Apart from the senior VET in Schools program, the school offers:

- Industry and Enterprise at year 11 which involves work placement of one day per week for the year (operating for the last two years);
- the Young Australian Achievers Program at year 10 (operating for the last four years);
- the New Apprenticeship Program for four students; and
- a work experience program at years 10 and 11.

Course descriptions

VET courses offered in 1998 are Agriculture and Automotive. Each has five timetabled periods and there are five further periods allocated to VET to teach the modules that are common to both Agriculture and Automotive.

Communications and other relevant competencies are taught and assessed within English, Maths and Information Technology. The teachers meet to determine what has been done in the subject, and there may then be a small amount of additional work needed. In the case of Agriculture, the teacher would meet with the Maths teacher to determine competencies and then write these up.

Both the Agriculture and Automotive teachers are trained workplace assessors, which enables them to assess the component of the training that is delivered in the workplace.

Video conferencing

The school has two computer rooms that are linked to the internet. Some of the units for Agriculture come through video-conferencing from Longeranong (the University of Melbourne Agricultural College near Horsham). Dimboola, Horsham and Warracknabeal undertake the CDX VET Web Automotive program through video-conferencing. The school is hoping to expand this to take in Hopetoun, Rainbow and Birchip in the near future.

The students travel to Longeranong for units that cannot be delivered through video-conferencing e.g. Irrigation.

Cluster

At this stage the cluster is still being developed. It will be called the Wimmera Industry/ Education Group and will involve Horsham, Goroke, Edenhope and Ararat/Stawell Secondary Colleges. The cluster will apply to ASTF for a full time work placement co-ordinator.

The cluster schools recognise that schools need to support each other to make VET happen in the schools. They aim to set up a database that will give a complete rundown on VET, co-ordinating all schools with specific dates, times and workplace agreements that will support the students in their work placements.

The students

The school is developing two streams at the year 10 curriculum level:

- a workforce stream, leading to VET courses;
- an academic stream, leading to the traditional VCE subjects.

The VET program is seen to have had positive outcomes for the students involved. Three students at years 11 and 12 have gone to study at Longeranong and others have gained jobs. This has meant that while there are a number of students in the first year of their certificates, there are few students who have completed the two years of the certificate.

Perceptions of VET

a) School and parents

While the demand for VET is generally increasing, VET is seen by some academic staff and by some areas of the local community as a course for 'under achievers'. There is still a strong push by parents that the students in town must go to tertiary education because they can't stay in the town. This was particularly strong with the girls. When there are better prospects in farming, there is more acceptance of VET programs e.g. Auto for support on the farm. However, parents perceive that it is necessary to have tertiary training now to be successful on the farm.

b) Students

Students doing Certificate II Auto report that they enjoy the subject because it's the trade that they want to work in. By doing the course, they can get the first year of their apprenticeship done at school.

They felt that there was not enough time to complete all the modules and so would have liked to have started these in year 10. They have to spend their lunch times and spares completing the modules. They would also like more specific VET work in their other subjects to help with the VET modules. They find that the amount of work in the VCE takes time away from the VET subject in which their interest lies.

The work placement was seen as valuable because the students could do training modules at the work placement (e.g. Seals and Bearings) which can be assessed at the workplace and so leave more time to complete modules at school.

c) Industry

According to the Office Manager at North West Business Centre, communication between the school and the office was established well. She had been a student at the school herself, so if she needs a trainee then she naturally approaches the school: she knows the system.

In 1997, one student did Certificate II Office and Admin with work placement at the NW Business Centre and this led to a traineeship in 1998. The Office Manager did not find the Office and Admin package very useful: the competencies didn't relate to the job. They would rather have developed specific competencies that were related to the particular job and also to have had the employer and the student on work placement develop goals to be achieved by the end of the placement.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Support of the Principal: The Principal has been a major player in setting up the VET program in the school. He is also involved in VET at a State level and so has knowledge about the future directions that VET will take as well as having a range of contacts for curriculum materials. He also ensures, at a practical level, that VET succeeds in the school. For example he was driving the NAP (Agriculture/Horticulture) students to Longeranong in Horsham each week for one of their programs until another form of transport could be organised with parents.

2 Barriers to course development

- Transport: One of the problems to be worked through is that of bussing. There is no sustainable bussing system within the cluster. Buses are not paid for by the State Government. (This is different to the situation in Charlton where the State bussing system brings students to the Cluster centre.)
- Understanding: Lack of understanding of VET by the general teaching staff inhibits development. There is a lack of appropriate professional development for staff, though this is now being addressed by the Region.
- Appropriate staff: There is a local lack of qualified staff to teach VET; the Auto teacher had to be recruited from Horsham;
- Lack of resources: There is a large amount of work required to locate and collect materials.
- Cost: The cost of access to a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) is high e.g. TAFE costs $100/hr for 12 students if the units cannot be provided on site. This means that schools have to join with other schools to make up viable numbers of students. Decreases in funding over the next few years will make sustainability an important issue.
- In-school competition: There is competition between the academic and vocational sections of the curriculum; if students do VET, then it will take numbers away from other (academic) subjects. On the other hand, in some schools, there has been an associated increase in numbers of students in some subjects e.g. offering Engineering has meant increased numbers doing Physics.
- Work placements: The Department of Education is currently addressing problems with public liability cover in work placements.

3 Partnerships

- School–school: A cluster is being developed, which will set up a database on VET, and provide co-ordination of workplace agreements.
- School–industry: There is good communication between the school and industry around work placements but no formal arrangements.
- School–TAFE: Because of costs of access to TAFE, partnerships between schools to create viable numbers of students are necessary.

4 Industry placements

- Some work placement are available locally; workplace assessment of modules are seen as valuable.

5 Changes

No specific notes.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

- The school has a small New Apprenticeship Program with four students.

Yarrawonga Secondary College

School profile

Location:	approx. 225 km N of Melbourne
School size:	340 students
Ethnic background:	Anglo
Community growth:	fairly stable: recreational area

Background

The school has an ethos to cater for a wide range of students at the senior level, and the provision of vocational education is seen as part of this ethos. There is a commitment in the school charter to extending the range of VET programs to meet the needs of all students. While the school has had some focus on vocational education in the past (e.g. through the STC program), the strongest focus for vocational education has been over the last three years.

Hospitality has been offered since 1996 because it was appropriate for the area, since a link could be made with the local Mulwala Services Club. Ten students started in 1996 at Year 11 and three students started the second year.

Vocational education begins in the middle school with a work experience program and a careers education program, which runs as a semester unit of study.

Course descriptions

At present, the only VET course offered is Certificate II in Hospitality. At present there are three students in the first year of the Certificate and two completing the second year.

There is no TAFE provider in town: however the school has a joint venture with the Mulwala Services Club. The modules that are specific to the industry are completed at the Services Club when the students are on their one day a week work placement at year 11 level. The students then do an evening work placement there at year 12.

The school buys in specialist training services from the Club and the remainder of training is provided through teaching and assessment of VET competencies within the VCE. The school is one of very few schools to be registered as a private provider with OTFE.

A system has now been established that allows teachers to fill in log books for the modules that can be assessed in their subjects. The logbooks are kept in a filing cabinet in the Careers office. For Hospitality it is necessary for the students to have competencies assessed in English, Maths, Information Technology and Materials and Technology (Food).

Because some of the modules are so specific, it has meant that, while only five of the students in Information Technology are doing Hospitality, all the students end up doing the modules.

The teachers felt that the credit transfer made the course viable and that the students were not academic enough to cope with extra work requirements if 'double dipping' for assessment of the competencies were not allowed.

The school would like to develop more VET courses to cater for some of the needs of other students in the school. The school is considering developing Certificate II Office and Administration, Certificate II Engineering and Certificate III Information Technology.

Work placement

The Services Club has been very supportive of the development of VET Hospitality in the schools. The Club has a strong community focus and finds that the opportunity to train the students for the industry is also beneficial to the Club. Having the students in the Club allows

the Club to see what the students are like in the work environment, which then allows the Club to make an informed decision when offering apprenticeships or ongoing work.

The development of communication between the Club and the school has been an ongoing process that has been determined by the needs of both the school and the Club. An example of this is the guidelines that have now been put into place governing work placements. The image that the students display at the Club is of great importance to the Club: students need to be well presented, punctual, polite and deal with matters in a professional matter as they are on show to the public and are representing both the school and the Club. In 1997, there were some difficulties with students who elected to do the Hospitality course. Some did not display the motivation and responsibility that was necessary to participate in the course successfully. Some were regarding the day of work placement as a 'day off school' rather than having a commitment to their work at the Club. These students eventually had to be removed from the course. The guidelines have now been put in place to allow the parents, the Club, the school and the students to be aware of their responsibilities.

The Club now takes an active role in the selection of the students, with the students being interviewed by the school and the Human Resources Manager of the Club. The students also need to write about why they are interested in Hospitality.

Another example of the communication needed was in the development of the log books for the signing off of the competencies. The original log book was obtained from Warrnambool, and this was then modified by the Human Resources Manager at the Club, and by the school.

Cluster

The VET operation of the cluster was centred on the services provided by the Club. The school clusters with Galen College (Wangaratta) and with Rutherglen Secondary College. These schools also have training provided by the Services Club. Galen organises their training on a block basis at the club and does work placement in Wangaratta because of the problems associated with transport.

In 1998 the program involves five students from Yarrawonga, one student from Rutherglen and ten students from Galen.

The students

Student choice for years 11 and 12 is guided through careers counselling. The school employs outside experts to test and profile the students and then advise the students on the alternatives within the VCE and VET.

The students felt that the course had improved their job prospects and that their confidence had increased. They were clear about what was expected of them and found that the course was meeting their expectations.

Seven students have been employed locally as a result of the program. Others have gone onto apprenticeships and further training.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Community relations: The good will between the school and the Services Club has been a major factor in the success of the program.
- Work placements: There are possible work placements available in the area e.g. at ADI for engineering and at a number of food manufacturers such as Uncle Toby's, Kraft and Uncle Bens.
- Resources available: The close proximity of the school at Yarrawonga to the Club allows access for the students on an ongoing basis and, in turn, this supports the development of a relationship between the students, the school and the Club.

2 Barriers to course development

- Differing work placement and training expectations: The Services Club has experienced some difficulty with some students from other schools in completing other work placements in Wangaratta. The Club found there were differences in skills and expectations between the work placement and the modules that then had to be taught in a block at the Club. Bed making was given as an example here.
- Cluster tensions: There is a work placement co-ordinator based in Wangaratta who works with the North-East Cluster of schools. It was felt that the Co-ordinator spent most time working with the bigger schools in the Cluster. The co-ordinator has only visited Yarrawonga twice, and therefore all the work place co-ordination is done by a teacher at Yarrawonga.
- Funding: There was an initial seeding grant from ASTF which funded a part-time cluster co-ordinator but this position has now been defunded.

  It was felt that the cost of VET (with funding being decreased) would make VET unviable in small country schools, particularly when only a few students would do each VET subject. The school would like to continue with VET but sees the New Apprenticeship Program as possibly a better alternative, with the students doing a modified VCE.

  The school needs more money and resources to promote VET within the community. For example, a brochure has been funded by the ASTF and the Club has done the layout for it.

  There was a comment by the industry person that costs would be a problem in the future. She felt that all except two of the modules (Clubs and Gaming) could be done at the school by a teacher. However, there is a need for an industrial kitchen at year 12.
- Appropriate resources: There was a lack of qualified staff. It has also been difficulty to find other resources.
- Competition between subjects: Conflict is identified over subjects competing for numbers of students. How thin can the number of students be spread?
- Community perceptions: There is a perception that tertiary education is still the preferred way to go. If the school didn't offer what was necessary for tertiary entrance then the standing of the school would fall in the community.
- Time: Time is needed to organise and make contact with other workplaces. Time to develop courses is also a priority. There is only a two period a week time allowance and a SRP to run VET. Both previous co-ordinators found the job a huge amount of work and would not reapply for 1998. There has been a different co-ordinator for each year. Registration has also taken an enormous amount of time and work. The status was applied for in 1996 and only received in 1998 by telephone and fax.
- Travel: Travel for students to workplaces other than the Service Club is difficult.
- Teaching and assessment duplication: If there was more than one VET course running, it would also create extra work for the teacher in teaching and assessing VET competencies, as each of the VET subjects is slightly different in its requirements within each subject.

3 Partnerships

- School–school: The school is part of a cluster around local education–industry links.
- School–TAFE: There is no TAFE provider in town.
- School–industry: The school has a joint venture with the Mulwala Services Club in the Hospitality area, and this is characterised by a strong partnership arrangements around provision of specialist training services and work placements. The Club takes an active role in the selection of the students. The opportunity to train the students for the industry is seen as an advantage by the Club.

There has been ongoing communication between the Club and the school and the joint development of guidelines governing work placements: presentation, punctuality, politeness, professional manner.

4 Industry placements

- There are several possible work placements available in the area.
- The Services Club offers a one day a week work placement at year 11 level, and an evening work placement at year 12.
- The Services Club has experienced some difficulty in comparative standards with other work placements: differences in skills and expectations between the work placements and the modules.

5 Changes

- Development of strong school–industry links has been extremely significant.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

No explicit mention.

Capella State High School

School profile

Location:	Central Queensland, half hour north of Emerald
School size:	225 students
Ethnic background:	2% NESB
Community growth:	uncertain – varies with mining prospects

Course descriptions

Current subjects are Engineering (years 11 and 12; 30 students), Computer Studies (year 11; 20 students) and Hospitality (years 11 and 12; 20 students).

Work placement

Years 11 and 12 have two weeks of work placement per year (i.e. four weeks total), with, each year, one week in school time (usually late July) and one week in the holidays. The school leases a bus from 6 am to 6 pm to transport students to Emerald. This lease is shared with two other schools. The bus is thus available for travel to work placements.

School and industry representatives are currently setting up a work placement process, including establishing the necessary paper work to achieve communication and consistency.

The students

The VET program attracts students who are oriented to the trades and includes two students in traineeships. While Engineering is all boys, Hospitality is 50/50 and Computer Studies is 60/40 towards boys. The Head of Manual Arts is trying to promote the participation of girls in the Woodwork area by running an all girls Woodwork class at year 9 in order to encourage girls to continue with VET in years 11 and 12.

Perceptions of VET

a) Parents

Parents report that they find that their students are happier coming to school with the development of VET.

b) Community/industry

The community profile of the school is claimed to have grown in the area as a result of the contact made with industry. At one particular industry, Waratah Engineering, there was a very positive relationship between the school and the manager of the industry. The manager's wife was a former primary school principal in the area. The manager had a very positive view of the value of work placement. Employers now ask the school for recommendations of students for ongoing work.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- industry links: The development of contacts into partnerships has been significant

2 Barriers to course development

- Work placements: Finding appropriate work placements in a small town like Capella is a problem. The students do these work placements in either Capella or Emerald.
- Travel: If the students go to Emerald, then transport is a problem, as there is no public transport between Capella and Emerald.
- Cost: There are costs associated with travel, teacher release and the production of booklets.
- Resources: There are difficulties in finding human and physical resources to operate programs. The school looks beyond Queensland to NSW and Victoria to find quality resources. In-service days with larger schools help with this problem.

  It is difficult to attract and keep qualified staff at the small rural schools as the teachers need to be skilled across a range of areas.

3 Partnerships

- School–industry: Positive relationships between the school and industry representatives have developed, including the establishment of a work placement process.

4 Industry placements

- Finding appropriate work placements in a small town is a problem. Years 11 and 12 have two weeks of work placement per year, with one week in school time and one week in holidays. The school bus, shared with two other schools is available for travel to work placements.

5 Changes

- Joint work between the school and industry representatives on work placement procedures.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

No specific mention.

Charters Towers: School of Distance Education

School profile

Location:	school in western Queensland: students all over Queensland
School size:	470 students: 169 secondary, 289 primary
Ethnic background:	varies
Community growth:	n/a

Background

There are no 'permanent students' at the school, though some students travel in 400–600 km for the occasional session. Other students are overseas and itinerant students. Any resident of Queensland can enrol. The Queensland catchment area exceeds 250,000 square km.

The delivery of the curriculum is through printed text, audio and audio-visual material. Communication is through telephone, fax, e-mail and internet chat.

There are field visits by teaching staff who set up a school for four days. There is high parental involvement with the parents being the home tutor, but not receiving any recognition for this. VET provides the possibility for recognising and accrediting this.

Course descriptions

Whereas VET generally only caters for years 11 and 12 in the broader schooling system, the School of Distance Education needs to deal with VET at year 10 or earlier as many of the students undertaking year 10 courses are adults or older youth.

The school itself tried to register as a private provider but this was rejected. Instead a professional association for distance education (AADES) set up as an independent association with a community focus and is now a private provider. It has taken a long time to get this in place. This arrangement now provides for recognition of prior learning (RPL) for subjects done at the school. The school issues the certificates in Vocational Education.

Certificates II in Office Administration and Information Technology have a rural focus and are offered to students from the age of 14 years onwards (though half of the students are over 16 years old). Home tutors also access these VET activities.

The school has four teachers trained in Certificate IV workplace assessment. Two teachers are trained in TAFE and Vocational Education.

The courses were established with seeding funding from the school. Parents also subsidise the delivery.

Work placement

Service Clubs and a local Workplace Training Co-operative manage work placements across the catchment area. Some students find their own work placement but this is very difficult as the students are extremely isolated.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Teachers trained in TAFE and VET areas.

2 Barriers to course development

- Central curriculum control: School staff commented that young people's educational needs were not examined. The structural barriers that restricted VET to schools with senior secondary levels hamper access for rural students.

3 Partnerships

- Partnership with a Distance Education Professional Association as a private provider.

4 Industry placements

- Service Clubs and a local Workplace Training Co-operative manage work placements across the catchment area. Some students find their own work placement but this is very difficult as the students are extremely isolated.

5 Changes

No specific mention.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

No specific mention.

Clermont State High School

School profile

Location:	one hour north of Emerald
School size:	220 students
Ethnic background:	mainly Anglo
Community growth:	uncertain – cattle, grain, mining

Course development: Staff professional development

Staff have to undertake an industry release program to fulfil the requirement of registration. The principal felt there was no difficulty in meeting the training requirements. For example, in Hospitality it meant that the teacher had to go to a private provider to do the training. This required the teacher's work load to be covered internally, or for the school to buy in replacement teacher cover. Some of this training is done in school holidays and some in school time.

Course descriptions

Subjects offered are Business, Computer Studies, Hospitality, English Communication, Trade and Business Maths, Industry Skills: Finishing, Engineering and Introduction to Industrial Metals.

Work placement

Students undertake a work placement program of six weeks over years 11 and 12, with four weeks in year 11 and two weeks in year 12. A panel of three employers interviews the students for work placements. Not all students are selected for work placement; students have to be organised and able to show the interview panel that they are worth taking for a work placement. The students are aware that their chances of obtaining an apprenticeship at the end of year 12 are limited if they are not selected for work placement. One industry comes to the school to select and place apprentices at the end of year 12.

Local industry is very supportive of the work placement program, and there are more industries wanting to be involved than there are students to place. Parents are keen for the work placement to be provided in the local community, as they do not want to send the students away from home.

Cluster

Clermont was initially in a cluster with three other schools (Capella, Emerald, and Blackwater) to obtain ASTF funding for work placement, but no longer works with the cluster and so does not get the ASTF funding.

The barriers to clustering were found to be that distances were too great (up to 200 km to Blackwater) and the different cultures of the different towns. Clermont is predominantly farming and small business, while the other school in the cluster were in mining towns.

The students

Seventy-five per cent of the students do some VET; 20 per cent of students do 'pure VET'.

The range of students doing VET varies enormously. The school uses VET subjects as a form of behaviour control for some boys in year 10 who are at risk of leaving school. Other students who are 'learning disabled' are encouraged to take VET subjects and then repeat

them in order to gain a sound understanding of the content, rather than to formally complete Certificates or modules.

Some of the students express no interest in further education and see their future within the district, while other students aspire to go on to university and find VET subjects helpful for finding jobs while undertaking further study.

Perceptions of VET

Overall, it is claimed that the community sees the program very positively. It was described as giving the community breathing space and getting unemployed young people off the streets. The principal said that there was no unemployment among young people in the town; the VET Program kept young people, who would otherwise have left school at the end of year 10, in school with the chance of getting an apprenticeship.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Community support

2 Barriers to course development

There were substantial resourcing issues for the operation of successful VET courses:

- The prioritising of VET within the school had taken funds away from the lower end of the school.
- Staffing is an issue in a remote area and it is particularly difficult to keep trained staff for VET subjects, e.g. manual arts teachers are hard to get.
- The provision of a range of VET subjects means that fewer Board subjects can be operated e.g. to take on VET subjects means that Health and PE may go.
- The high cost of consumables in some VET subjects e.g. woodwork, means that either the parents have to contribute more or money has to come from other subject allocations. For a real cost of $360 per head, students only pay $30.

3 Partnerships

- School–school: The school was in a cluster with other schools, but distances and cultural differences led to the breakdown of this grouping.
- School–industry: Strong links with supportive local industry around work placement. Employers interview students.

4 Industry placements

- A work placement program of six weeks over years 11 and 12, with four weeks in year 11 and two weeks in year 12.

5 Changes

No specific mention.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

- Work placement is seen as critically linked with obtaining of apprenticeships at the end of year 12.

Moura State High School

School profile

Location:	almost two hours SW of Rockhampton
School size:	215 students
Ethnic background:	5% Aboriginal, 95% Anglo
Community growth:	related to the mine: the underground closed three years ago after an accident; a decision will be made soon on the open cut

Course descriptions

VET subjects currently offered are:

- Trade and Business Maths (year 12; 11 students);
- Computer Studies (years 11 and 12; 33 students);
- Industrial Skills (years 11 and 12; 33 students);
- Land and Animal Systems (years 11 and 12; 9 students); and
- Hospitality (years 11 and 12; 25 students).

Because the school is the provider, it must have appropriate training for staff in the certificates to be taught.

Work placement

The school aims for 20 days work placement per year for all students.

Cluster

Moura is in the Gladstone cluster. There is ASTF and ANTA funding to employ a cluster co-ordinator, who works from Gladstone, and a VET co-ordinator who is based at the school.

Perceptions of VET

Industry representatives are worried about issues such as the legality of students driving tractors without licenses, and about filling in competencies in the log books.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Community links: The provision of VET courses has created closer links with the community, which perceives that the school is looking after the broader needs of the students and not just preparing them for university. It has also provided a base level of training for local industries. There was now a perception within the local community that when the students leave school, they will have some skills and be at least partly productive.
- Educational outcomes: Some students have stopped seeing themselves as being 'trapped' within an academic curriculum and have been able to see an end product to their schooling. This has reduced some behaviour management problems for some teachers and there has also been a change in teaching practices with the change in the curriculum.
- Co-ordinator: Having a locally based co-ordinator solves many problems associated with work placement e.g. establishing workplace agreements.

2 Barriers to course development

- Staff training and mobility: Teachers come out of training institutions without undertaking the appropriate modules required to teach the certificates. The school thus invests time and money for the teachers to complete these necessary TAFE modules. These teachers become better qualified and more employable, but then transfer to the coast and leave. This leaves the school back at the beginning with new untrained staff. The principal suggested that, in the interim period before the teaching institutions provided teachers trained for TAFE modules, there should be some leeway for schools in providing the trained staff. For example, in Trade and Business Maths, the school had a teacher trained at university level in Maths but did not have a trained TAFE Maths teacher so had to employ the local Ambulance Officer who had the certificate to deliver the courses.
- Distance: Distance is a problem for attendance at meetings: Gladstone is two hours away.
- Work placements: There are limited opportunities for work placement and generally for access to industry, as the local economy is in temporary decline.

3 Partnerships

- School–school: The school is a member of a cluster that shared resources to provide a co-ordinator.
- School–industry: VET is seen as being supportive of local industry training needs.

4 Industry placements

- Few opportunities exist for work placement in an economically depressed area.
- The school aims for 20 days work placement per year for all students.
- Work placement agreements are assisted by the local co-ordinator.

5 Changes

No specific mention.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

No specific mention.

Keith Area School

School profile

Location:	approx 230 km SE of Adelaide (inland)
School size:	450 students R–12; 146 students 7–12
Ethnic Background:	Anglo
Community growth:	Relatively stable – school enrolments have decreased by about 100 over the last 5 years

Background

Work education is included in Society and Environment Studies from years 7 to 10. Year 10 includes a semester of Work Education. There is counselling of students in regard to careers as the school has found that in many cases there is an unrealistic expectation among the students that they will find a job that will last them for life.

The motivation for introducing VET is to give the students a taste of what is available and to open doors for the students. It is also seen as a way to maintain numbers at the school, although the school will lose six students to Lucindale Area School in 1999 as Lucindale offers a more specialised Agriculture program.

Course descriptions

At this stage VET is only at the year 11 level. The VET subjects articulate into SACE, SAS or PAS subjects at year 12. The students complete introductory modules but do not complete to a Certificate level.

The school delivers VET programs in three ways:

1 VET modules are embedded in the SACE (the program that runs at year 11 and 12). The teachers are trained as workplace assessors and the school has a Memorandum of Understanding with TAFE for the teachers to deliver the programs. The VET subjects delivered in this way are:

- Business Studies
- Computing Studies
- English C (Writing skills for Work)

2 TAFE/school partnership. The students have one day per week work placement, TAFE instruction when there is a need for specialised equipment and teaching to complete specific modules, and instruction at school for the other modules. The VET subjects delivered in this way are:

- Furniture construction
- Automotive pathways
- TRAC – Retail
- Hospitality

3 Pilot program outside the school timetable. Seven Year 10 students are completing the Irrigation Pathways program that is being run at the Naracoorte Institute of TAFE in the School Holidays. The students complete modules and work placement. By doing this year 10, students are able to complete SACE units before reaching Year 11. The students need to complete 50 hours of the Program to complete a SACE subject.

Work placement

The students do a range of different work placements. In some cases (TRAC Retail) the students do one day a week. The work placements have helped the students obtain employment. In 1997, five students started TRAC Retail and two obtained employment from the work placement.

Cluster

The School clusters on a needs basis. Keith Area School sends students to Bordertown who provide the TAFE component of the Auto course.

Perceptions of VET

Initially (TRAC Retail in 1996) the parents and students were not keen to take the risk of doing a VET subject although the employers were supportive. This has now changed and parents and students are more positive about VET.

Publicising the success of the programs in the local newspaper and the school newsletter has facilitated this. The students also receive certificates at school assembly.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

Staff are involved in the decision making in regard to VET programs. This is relevant for all teachers as they may require support in other subjects as a result of their VET program. The teachers need to be flexible to accommodate the arrangements. This is especially relevant at the end of the year when the students are out of the school of a number of different work placements and courses.

2 Barriers to course development

Because of the small size of the school, resulting in limited resources and small student numbers, the school needs to assess if it needs to specialise more (such as Lucindale/ Agriculture) rather than offering a wider range of subjects.

There is no departmental funding for TAFE placements so when the Ready Set Go money finishes, it will be difficult to sustain the TAFE component.

3. Partnerships

- School–school: The school is part of an occasional cluster.
- School–TAFE: There are strong working links with TAFE: training of teachers as workplace assessors, TAFE approval of teacher-delivered programs, and provision by TAFE of course components, particularly when there is a need for specialised equipment and teaching. TAFE also offered a holiday course for some students.

4 Industry placements

- Students have work placements for one day per week in different areas. Students are also on a range of work placements and courses at the end of the year.

5 Changes

- Increased support from parents and students for VET following positive local publicity.
- Staff involvement in VET decision making has increased support and flexibility of arrangements.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

No specific mention.

Kingston Community School

School profile

Location:	approx 250 km SE of Adelaide (on coast)
School size:	500 students from R–12
Ethnic background:	Anglo
Community growth:	The community is seen as a retirement area and tourism is beginning to provide growth in the area. The Fishing Industry is relatively stable and there is growth in Viticulture. Many students are able to find jobs in this industry after finishing school.

Background

The school developed a work education component to the curriculum at year 10 in 1982. It now has work experience and work education at year 10 and work experience at year 11. There was no charter document or mission statement that specifically mentioned vocational education in its priorities.

Course descriptions

The VET subjects offering some embedded TAFE modules are Maritime Studies, Office, Retail and Furniture Construction. TRAC, which is offered at Year 11 only, is a work placement subject.

The Fishing Industry Pathways Program

The South Australian Fishing and Seafood Industry Training Council (FSITC) based in Port Adelaide, in conjunction with the Education Department, has initiated a Fishing Industries Pathways program. ASTF provided $96,000 to set up the program.

The Fishing Industries Pathways Program is a constructive industry effort to ensure that a pool of skilled people will be available for employment, particularly as sections of the fishing industry expand and grow. The aim of the program is to establish a career pathway for secondary students and to enable the industry to deliver relevant training to students who will be 'the future of the fishing industry'.

Six schools were approached to participate in the program. As the industry has resourced, initiated and managed the program, only a limited number of schools were selected in order to maintain standards and to allow for appropriate resourcing and management. This also helped to ensure that there were enough employment places for students to go to at the end of the program. The program is centrally monitored by the FSITC through a Statewide management and co-ordination committee that steers the course.

The industry has resourced and developed the logbooks that are used for the work placement. Teachers are flown to the Australian Fisheries Academy at Port Adelaide for regular training courses. Industry members involved in work placement attend training at the local school to have the course and their role in training students in the workplace explained to them.

Training delivered at the school involves a combination of school-delivered modules (welding and fabrication), local industry (fishermen) delivered modules (ropes and knots), St John's Ambulance first aid and State industry delivered modules (ship board safety, radio telephony) delivered at the school by the Australian Fisheries Academy.

Work placement

Much of the work experience was completed in the school holidays. One of the Maritime students had worked on a crayfish boat for a week. The Irrigation Pathways student will complete their work experience at the end of the year.

Cluster

The clustering with other schools is on a needs basis. This clustering does not occur within Kingston's regional cluster but with other relevant schools outside their cluster in order to provide some modules of the Maritime pathways course to these other schools.

A number of schools in the region send students to an Irrigation Pathways course that is provided in Naracoorte at the Regional Office, partly in school time and partly in school holidays.

In comparison, in the Mt Gambier cluster, each school has begun to specialise in different VET pathways. Schools send students to particular schools for particular subjects.

Perceptions of VET

Parents expressed satisfaction with the VET courses. They perceived the courses as part of the school's curriculum and thought they would help their children get a job in the future. The fishing industry has previously only been open to young people who already have families involved. Maritime studies has led to traineeships for students who did not have other contacts in the industry.

The students felt that the VET pathways courses had been worthwhile. Maritime Studies was seen as a good opportunity to get licences and experience, as well as helping students to get through a future course in a related area. Irrigation Pathways had enabled one student to be offered an interview for an Engineering apprenticeship with the Government. The student doing Office Studies found that the course made school more worthwhile because it was related to her future career choice and was more 'hands on'.

Themes

1 Factors that have facilitated course development

- Industry involvement: Teachers felt the success of the program (Maritime studies) related to the level of resourcing, support and training provided by the Industry Board.

  In the TRAC program, which places students in work placement one day a week, it was important to sell the course to the community. The school has 32 businesses that take students.

- Support of the Principal

2 Barriers to course development

- Funding: On going funding for VET from the Department is an issue once Ready Set Go money runs out.

  Cost of providing a service provider was a barrier to providing TRAC in year 12.

  There is a high cost to funding assessor training for teachers.

  There are budgeting and staffing concerns to provide ongoing VET subjects.

- Staffing: Need to have staff flexibility to be able to timetable one day off a week.

  Difficulty in selling VET (especially TRAC) to the staff, some of whom are resistant to change.

In a small school, most teachers end up with many areas of responsibility of which VET may be just one.

- Curriculum structure: The school would find it easier to run VET if there were more generic modules that could run across courses. This would require across industry support which the teachers felt would be difficult to achieve.

3 Partnerships

- School–school: The school is part of a loose cluster around similar industry areas.
- School–industry: There is a strong partnership between the school and the South Australian Fishing and Seafood Industry Training Council (FSITC). This involves six schools, a Statewide management, co-ordination and steering committee, teacher training, and industry training (for work placements) at the local school. Modules are jointly delivered by industry, schools and the community.

4 Industry placements

- In year 11, a work placement subject is offered in partnership with local businesses.
- Work placements generally occur in the school holidays.

5 Changes

- The significant change has occurred through the industry-initiated developments.

6 Apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements

- VET programs are clearly seen as leading to future industry apprenticeships.

Stage 2 case studies

Camperdown Secondary College

School profile

Location:	194 kilometres west of Melbourne, between Geelong and Warrnambool
School size:	200 students co-educational
Ethnic background:	Predominantly Anglo
Community growth:	Relatively stable

Background

Camperdown College is a P–12 Government School which is one of two secondary school providers in the town, the other being the Camperdown Catholic Regional College. Camperdown College's school charter does not specifically address vocational education as a priority in its charter, although the maximisation of student choice within the VCE has been a priority over the past five years. This has been taken to encompass provision of VET options to students as part of the VCE where possible. In 1999 the school charter is being reviewed and the development of a more specific VET policy is part of the review process.

Previous VET course development

Camperdown College has some history in the provision of Vocational Education, offering the Schools Year Twelve and Tertiary Entrance Certificate (STC) up until the introduction of the VCE. There was an attempt to promote Hospitality as a key vocational program following the demise of STC, but this came at a time of declining enrolments and failed to gain sufficient numbers to justify staffing. In more recent years, a small number of individual students began Certificate II Clerical and Administrative Studies in 1997, one subsequently leaving school to take up a clerical position with a solicitor in Camperdown. In 1998, one student embarked on Certificate II in Automotive through Gordon TAFE (Colac) completing VCE units with credit transfer at Camperdown. This student obtained an auto apprenticeship in Colac mid year.

Recent and current VET course developments

Industry and Enterprise Studies Units 1 and 2 were taught for the first time in 1998 to a combined Camperdown College and Catholic Regional College class of 12 students. This gave some scope for work placement for one afternoon per week and work experience in one-week blocks. Some students completed their work experience, which is part of Industry and Enterprise Work Requirement 2, during school term time and some during term holidays.

Industry and Enterprise was offered to current Year 10 students going onto the VCE in 1999 as part of the normal free choice students are given at Camperdown. Insufficient numbers of students chose the subject for it to be staffed in 1999.

Approval to substitute Industry and Enterprise, at Year 10, for of Australian Studies was sought—to be blocked against LOTE: Indonesian. This is seen as an opportunity to retain the subject in the curriculum, provide a better choice appropriate to the needs of students, and promote a vocational focus prior to choosing VCE subjects.

During term 3 of 1998, prior to Year 10 students making their initial VCE subject selections, all students were surveyed regarding their interest in VET programs. The Year 10 students had considerable familiarisation with VET, as part of work education in Year 10 Business Studies.

Three main programs were targeted as realistic possibilities for 1999:

- Certificate II Business (formerly Clerical and Administrative skills)

  Relying on a similar structure as in the past with Admin Training Company support documentation, workplace training, assessment and regular placement through the Shire of Corangamite or other suitable employers. Credit transfer to be delivered in VCE subjects.

- Certificate II Agriculture

  Training to be delivered on holidays in weekly blocks at Glenormiston Agriculture College under the SWAGVET cluster.

- Certificate II Automotive

  As in the past, through Gordon TAFE Colac campus.

- New Apprenticeship: Agriculture – Farming was also offered for the first time.

The result of the initial survey was that:

- two boys expressed an interest in the New Apprenticeship: Agriculture – Farming.
- three girls expressed interest in the Certificate in Business but were very non-committal.

Later in Term 3 the College conducted its VCE information evening, where VET in Schools and New Apprenticeships were promoted as an attractive option to students and parents. Information brochures were handed out, a presentation explaining VET was given by the Careers/VET teacher and a short video stressing student outcomes was shown.

After further consultation with the students and parents concerned, one student elected to pursue a New Apprenticeship: Farming – Dairying in 1999. This includes four days per week at school completing four VCE units per semester, the equivalent of two days per week on the farm, and training through Glenormiston as in the VET Agriculture program. Western Victoria Group Training has been heavily involved in recruiting employers and students.

A girl in Year 10 also expressed an interest in VET Horse Studies. The College is investigating this option but it is unsure whether this will be possible. Glenormiston College is looking at a course for surrounding schools which runs on weekends, provided at least 15 students are enrolled.

Perceptions of VET

The three girls who showed an initial interest in Certificate II Business, decided against this choice. The main reason given was that they did not want to be restricted in their choice of VCE subjects and that they were concerned about the amount of time involved in work placement.

There is a perception amongst staff that there is a significant number of less academically inclined students coming through the school in the junior years (Years 7–9). Therefore the need to develop pathways for these students may become even more critical in the near future.

Factors that have facilitated course development

- history of development of school-based courses at senior level
- strong interest from some students and families
- teacher perception of need in terms of future student cohorts

Barriers to course development

Students-related barriers have been:

- the small numbers of students electing to take up VET
- students opting out of VET because they see it as restricting their subject choice within the VCE
- the extra commitment of training conducted during holidays, travel, study at another school or institution, and work placement taking time from VCE studies

Staff-related barriers have been:

- the lack of suitably qualified staff to deliver VET
- VET competes with traditional VCE subject offerings and would threaten the existence of these subjects
- broadening ownership of VET studies
- limited time for co-ordination of role, which is subsumed as part of the Careers Teacher's role

There have also been concerns expressed about the ongoing funding arrangements and sustainability of courses is seen as impractical.

Changes and developments

In 1999, one student is undertaking the New Apprenticeship in Agriculture: Farming – Dairy. This may be an 'easier' option for the school to provide than VET in Schools and hopefully will provide a pathway for more students in the future.

The College will continue to offer VET programs which can be accommodated through tapping into clusters and entering into arrangements with training providers. It is unlikely at this stage that Camperdown College will be looking at registering as a Registered Training Provider (RTO).

Impact of this project

- review of the school charter and inclusion of a VET policy
- some combined classes with a school from Stage 1
- reorganisation of timetable structure for block work placement
- extension of VET studies below year 11
- promotion of VET as attractive option to students and parents
- identification of similar barriers to those identified in Stage 1
- reinforcement of recognition of the difficulties involved in establishing class-size groups of students undertaking VET

Hopetoun Secondary College

School profile

Location:	400 kilometres north west of Melbourne in the Mallee district
School size:	125 students
Ethnic background:	Predominantly Anglo/European
Community growth:	Static

Background

The College has for some time been aware of a gap in the provision of education for a number of students for whom a full academic program is not appropriate.

Previous VET course development

The introduction of the new VCE provided some optimism and the College introduced new studies at the 3 and 4 level in Materials and Technology (Word, Metal, Food), Technological Design and Development (Wood, Metal and Textiles), Systems and Technology, and Information Technology. Not every one of those subjects was taken up every year however, over the years, there has been quite a strong demand.

Associated with the new units of study, the College also embarked upon an enhanced Work Experience Program with students undertaking a week's work experience in Year 10 and another week in Year 11. Students were also offered additional work experience in the holidays. Additionally the College encouraged a number of students to undertake a school-to-work transition program involving work for one day a week. Industry and Enterprise studies were also introduced in 1998.

Nonetheless an emerging gap has again become apparent in the past few years. Early exploratory attempts to introduce Vocational Educational and Training (VET) proved fruitless due to a number of factors.

Recent and current VET course developments

Early in 1998, the Work Experience Co-ordinator, VCE Co-ordinator and the Principal met and agreed upon the need to provide VET options for students and mapped out a strategy to publicise VET and get staff and community support for its introduction.

The College undertook a range of activities in the areas of:

- professional development
- promoting the benefits of VET;
- supporting co-operative arrangements
- resource and support provision

One outcome has been that, in 1999, six students are involved in the following VET Studies areas: Retail (1), Electronics (1), and Auto (4).

Factors that have facilitated course development

Below is a list of some of the activities, processes and approaches used within the school to facilitate this development. The list is not in chronological order or in order of importance.

Professional development

- the Careers Teacher attended a large number of VET information sessions with other Careers Teachers
- the region became proactive in the VET area
- The Careers Teacher, VCE Co-ordinator and Principal attended PD activities in Horsham and Ballarat
- after attendance at VET PD, reports were provided at staff meetings always talking up the benefits of VET
- staff were encouraged to visit other schools offering VET
- encouraged staff (open and personal) to attend subject specific VET PD activities
- Principal joined Regional VET PD committee and this had impact into type of activities planned location an timing
- four staff undertook VET Assessor Training

Supporting co-operative arrangements

- VET was an agenda item at West Wimmera Secondary Cluster meetings and program implementation was discussed
- strong support for a Region sponsored VET cluster
- personal approaches made to key staff
- regional VET Cluster worked closely with the University of Ballarat, Horsham TAFE (now under Ballarat University) and Wimmera Grampians Group Training

Promoting the benefits of VET

- conscious effort made to publicise VET on School Newsletter, at Parents Club and School Council
- a number of staff meetings were devoted to VET presentations
- conscious effort made to talk up VET at Year 10 Parent Information evening. The Careers Teacher and VCE Co-ordinator followed this up with personal contact and discussion
- recognition that a number of Year 10 students would benefit from VET studies. Students and parents approached

Resource and support provision

- Casual Relief Teacher (CRT) support for VET activities
- grant from CEP further assisted CRT support and travel for staff

Impact of this project

- introduction of VET courses within school for first time
- leadership in VET issues by senior staff
- development of a specific focus and a range of strategic initiatives
- enabled visits to and use of information from other schools
- cluster development
- allocation of priority resources within the school

Nathalia Secondary College

School profile

Location:	270 kilometres north of Melbourne near the Murray River, between Echuca, Cobram and Shepparton
School size:	170 students
Ethnic background:	Predominantly Anglo/European
Community growth:	Static growth – services the largely rural industries of cropping, grazing and dairying

Background

Nathalia Secondary College is a member of the Goulburn Murray Vocational Education Cluster, which includes schools from the Shepparton/Mooroopna area and surrounding districts.

Previous VET course development

The school has a well developed work experience program at Year 10 and students have the opportunity to study Business and Enterprise at VCE. Business and Enterprise provides students with one full day in the workplace where competencies are developed and progressively assessed.

Recent and current VET course developments

During 1998, the school surveyed the Year 10 students to determine their vocational interests and interests in VET studies and New Apprenticeships.

Five Year 10 boys expressed interest in obtaining New Apprenticeships in areas including plumbing, automotive and agriculture. The Northern Industry Education Board's Project Officer approached possible employers in the district with the intention of placing as many of the boys as possible. After initial discussions between three of the boys and the Project Officer, no suitable apprenticeships could be established. All of the interested boys have returned to school and are presently studying a normal VCE course.

Two boys were interested in undertaking Certificate I Electronics as part of a VET component of their VCE studies in 1999. This course was investigated thoroughly and was being provided through Maguire College in Shepparton. While this appeared to be a possible option for our students, travel from Nathalia to Shepparton on a regular basis proved to be a major impediment. The boys opted for a normal VCE course in 1999. The College is investigating the possibility of providing this course through a virtual delivery system.

Two boys, currently in Year 10, have been enrolled in Certificate III Information Technology at the Wodonga Institute of TAFE. They are studying Computer Programming Fundamentals using a virtual campus delivery system and have been assigned a tutor from the Wodonga Institute of TAFE. An Information Technology teacher at Nathalia Secondary College provides assistance and supervision at the school.

The funds provided in this study have been used to investigate VET alternatives and to support resourcing and travel costs where appropriate.. The College has made the expansion of VET opportunities for our VCE students a priority goal in our new charter.

Factors that have facilitated course development

- links with a local New Apprenticeship Project

Barriers to course development

- travel from Nathalia to Shepparton for training on a regular basis proved to be a major impediment
- lack of suitable work placements

Changes and developments

Nathalia Secondary College is currently teaching Certificate II Information Technology to a night class consisting of parents, teachers and students. The school is also investigating virtual delivery of training courses.

Impact of this project

- investigation of VET alternatives in other schools
- expansion of VET opportunities for VCE students a priority goal in the new school charter

St Arnaud Secondary College

School profile

Location:	245 km NW of Melbourne, in the Wimmera district
School size:	215 students
Ethnic background:	predominantly Anglo/European
Community growth:	static

Background

The College is part of the North Central Cluster which involves a number of secondary colleges located around Charlton – Wycheproof, Boort, Wedderburn, Donald, and McCauley.

Recent and current VET course developments

The College identified the following aims and strategies for developing the vocational education and training component of the curriculum.

Aims

1 To raise the profile of Vocational Education and Training within:
- the student population,
- students' parents and guardians, and
- local business houses.

2 To structure our school's program in such a way as to offer maximum flexibility in our delivery mode so that students can access the school program, ensure Registered Training Organisations' (RTO) delivery modes are possible, and undertake work.

Strategy developed to address Aim 1:

(a) Talk to various community and business groups within the town, including Rotary, Lions, Business Forum.

(b) Arrange dinner meeting of prospective employers and discuss with them the VET program and ways they can contribute.

(c) Individual meetings with employers to discuss VET.

(d) Undertake a role model program at the school.

(e) Provide appropriate counselling to students, parents and guardians, through the careers program.

(f) Work in conjunction with the North Central Cluster Centre located in Charlton.

Strategy developed to address Aim 2:

(a) Undertake professional development of staff.

(b) Work with Curriculum Committee to look at school structure and explore alternatives.

(c) Work with North Central Cluster Centre to maximise programs offered to students.

(d) Initiate contact with local group training company and other providers.

Impact of this project

These activities were designed to increase the College's capacity to incorporate VET and target those students for whom Vocational Training would support the achievement of their goals and give them the chance to undertake a diverse range of options.

St Mary of the Angels Secondary College, Nathalia

School profile

Location:	270 kilometres north of Melbourne near the Murray River, between Echuca, Cobram and Shepparton.
School size:	340 students
Ethnic background:	Predominantly Anglo/European
Community growth:	Static growth – services the largely rural industries of cropping, grazing and dairying

Background

This is the first year St Mary of the Angels College has been involved in any VET programs at Year 11.

Previous VET course development

Previous VET experience has been with:

- Year 10 Work Experience involving all Year 10s (66 students).

  This was undertaken in two one-week blocks.
- Year 11 Industry and Enterprise Class (involving 10 students).

  This involved the students spending one day a week in the workforce in an area of their choice and completing assignments about that industry.
- VET Certificate – Clerical Office and Administration (one student).

  The arrangement is that she completes one day a week in the workforce.
- New Apprenticeship in Retail (one student).

  This student works four hours one night a week and four hours on a Saturday morning. She then completes three days at TAFE in each of the school holidays.
- Limited Work Experience programs in Year 11 and 12.

Recent and current VET course developments

Current arrangements are:

- Year 10 Work Experience involving all Year 10s (60 students).

  This is undertaken in two, one-week blocks.
- Year 11 Industry and Enterprise Class (involving 15 students).

  This involved the students spending one day a week in the workforce in an area of their choice and completing assignments about that industry.
- VET Certificate – Clerical Office and Administration (one student).

  The arrangement is that she completes one day a week in the workforce.
- New Apprenticeship in Retail (one student).

  This student works four hours one night a week and four hours on a Saturday morning. She then completes three days at TAFE in each holidays.
- Students are currently negotiating possible New Apprenticeships: one in Hospitality, two in Retail and one in Auto;

  Limited Work Experience programs in Year 11 and 12.

Factors that have facilitated course development

- In general employers have been more receptive to joining as Industry and Enterprise employers than offering New Apprenticeships, mainly because of the cost and commitment level being less.
- Parents value New Apprenticeships more because the concept is familiar to them and they see it as more of a step along the way to a full time apprenticeship than a VET Certificate.
- Some parents have the impression that their child has had trouble coping with the VCE and therefore could not cope with the VCE and another VET Certificate, while they see a Part-time New Apprenticeship as more practical and therefore more achievable.
- The College believes New Apprenticeships are more achievable than VET Certificates, as it does not present the same problems of credit transfer, filling out registration forms and the large amount of paperwork necessary for one student.

Barriers to course development

- Travel to a cluster school or Shepparton TAFE for a few hours a week is seen as difficult for some students because of the distance and the lack of public transport. Attendance in blocks of three days, as in the New Apprenticeship Program, is often more achievable as students can stay with family or make other arrangements.

Changes and developments

- The College has spent the year trying to promote a lot of the new programs to the school community this year e.g. VET Certificates and New Apprenticeships. This has been done by the Parents and Friends running an information session on the programs, seminars given to Year 10 students and a lot of discussion through our newsletter.
- Staff have spent time trying to get information out to prospective employers to encourage them to join a program.

Impact of this project

- specific focus on promotion of courses

Terang College

School profile

Location:	217 kilometres west of Melbourne, between Warrnambool and Camperdown
School size:	210 students
Ethnic background:	Predominantly Anglo/European
Community growth:	Static

Previous VET course development

After investigating Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses for several years, Terang College enrolled its first students in 1997, when three Year 11 students commenced the Clerical and Administrative Skills VET Course. Up until this time, obstacles such as:

- distance to the nearest TAFE College
- curriculum restrictions including VCE Information Technology offered only via Distance Education
- small numbers of VCE students
- limited work placement opportunities

seemed to preclude our involvement.

Recent VET course developments

Following an information session with the Admin Training Company and subsequent investigation, the Administrative and Clerical Skills Certificate II was promoted to parents and students at our VCE Information Night. Initially two students took up the challenge followed by a third, once the program was seen to be successful.

Purchasing the self paced kits from the Admin Training Company overcame the problem of purchasing TAFE modules, while credit transfer was not difficult to gain via English, Business Management, Accounting and Information Technology. Work placements in local offices were readily available at the Cooinda Day Training Centre and Powermac Products. Students also completed a one week block in Melbourne offices while attending the Year 11 Work Experience Camp. The majority of the work placement requirement of 72 days over two years was completed in Year 11.

The success of the program encouraged another three students to undertake the Clerical and Administrative Skills Certificate II the following year. New work placements were found including the College primary and secondary campus general offices, which have proved to be beneficial for both students and the school.

1998 also saw the first students enrolled in Certificate II Retail following lengthy negotiations initiated with the Warrnambool College VET Co-ordinator and with the Warrnambool Retail Training Company at SEAL. This course was very popular with Terang College students who travelled to Warrnambool each Friday afternoon for a two hour training session with students from Warrnambool College and Emmanuel College followed by a work placement. Three of our students have since obtained full-time jobs and were able to obtain credit for training completed in their VET course.

During the year South-West Institute of TAFE took over delivery of the Retail units maintaining the same excellent trainer.

The forty-minute trip to and from Warrnambool proved less of a problem than imagined. It was made clear to parents and students in introductory interviews that travel arrangements were their responsibility and after a few initial difficulties, a combination of car-pooling and train proved to be quite effective.

Work placements for VET Retail students are largely organised by the trainer in Warrnambool in consultation with the VET Co-ordinator and the students themselves. Several students complete their work placement in Terang, some within an existing part-time job commitment. Flexible arrangements are tailored to students' needs where possible.

Support for the VET Business students has been provided by Western Victoria Group Training who completed workplace assessments for students, and this year is taking two students for their one day per week placement in the organisation's Warrnambool offices.

Factors that have facilitated course development

Support from staff at Terang College has been critical to the success of the program. They have been very accommodating of absences of VCE students from class. Perhaps here a small school has an advantage in closer relationships and increased flexibility in responding to students' needs.

Other facilitating factors included:

- experience: programs were seen to be successful
- support from Group Training and TAFE
- transformation of part-time job commitments into work placements

Barriers to course development

Setting up, promoting and monitoring programs for students takes considerable time with seemingly endless phone calls and meetings. Funding to cover Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs) has been of some assistance here, but there is a limit to how often a VCE teacher can be absent from classes.

Other barriers identified in the past have been:

- the distance to the nearest TAFE College
- curriculum restrictions, including that VCE Information Technology is offered only via Distance Education
- the small numbers of VCE students limits resource allocation
- limited work placement opportunities

Changes and developments

In 1999, one quarter of VCE students at Terang College are enrolled in VET in Schools or pre-apprenticeship programs. Five students have commenced the new Certificate II in Business (Office Administration) with training packages once again purchased from the Admin Training Company.

Staff have noted increased confidence, motivation and organisational skills in students undertaking VET courses. VET in Schools is certainly not an option for weaker students as the demands of juggling VCE studies, training and work placement require excellent time management, but the benefits are clear for those willing to making a commitment. At Terang College we hope to continue to expand VET in Schools programs available to students and are currently exploring Certificate II in Horse Studies and Certificate II in Sport and Recreation.

Impact of this project

- provision of time and financial support for individual program development
- substantial growth in numbers of students in VET courses